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FOUR PHASES
OF
LOVE,

TRANSLATED BY

E. H. KINGSLEY.

LONDON;
GEO. ROUTLEDGE & CO., FARRINGTON ST.;
NEW YORK—10, BEEKMAN STREET.

ONE SHILLING,



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FOUR PHASES OF LOVE.

BY

PAUL HEYSE.

TRANSLATED

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EYE-BLINDNESS AND SOUL-BLINDNESS.

CHAPTER I.

AT the open window, which looked out into the little flower-garden, stood the blind daughter of the village sacristan, refreshing herself in the cool breeze that swept across her hot cheeks ; her delicate, half-developed form trembled, her cold little hands lay folded in each other upon the window-sill. The sun had already set, and the night-flowers were beginning to scent the air.

Further within the room sat a blind boy on a stool, at the old spinet, playing wild melodies. He might have been about fifteen years old—only, perhaps, a year older than the girl. Whoever had heard and seen him, now throwing up his large eyes, and now turning his head towards the window, would never have suspected his privation—so much energy, and even impetuosity, lay in his every movement.

Suddenly he broke off in the midst of a religious hymn, which he seemed to have altered wildly after his own fancy.

“ You sighed ! ” he said, turning his face towards her.

"I ! No, Clement—why should I sigh ? I only shrank together as the wind blew in so strongly !"

"But you *did* sigh. Do you think that I did not hear it as I played ?—and I feel even here how you are trembling."

"Yes ; it has grown so cold."

"You cannot deceive me. If you were cold you would not stand at the open window. But I know why you sigh and tremble !—because the doctor is coming to-morrow, and will prick our eyes with needles—that is what makes you so afraid ; and yet he said how soon it would all be over, and that it would only be like the prick of a pin. And *you*, who used to be so brave and patient, that my mother always mentioned you as an example when I was little and cried when anything hurt me, though you were only a girl—have you now lost all your courage ? Do you never think of the happiness we have to look forward to ?"

She shook her little head, and answered, "How can you think that I am afraid of the passing pain ! But I am oppressed with silly, childish thoughts, which I cannot drive away. Ever since the day that the doctor the baron sent for came down from the castle to your father, and mother called us out of the garden—ever since that hour something weighs upon me and will not go away. You were so full of joy that you did not perceive it ; but when your father began to pray, and blessed God for this mercy, my

heart was silent and did not follow his prayer. I thought within myself, ‘What have I to be thankful for?’ and could not understand.”

Thus she spoke in a quiet resigned voice. The boy again struck a few light chords. Between the sharp whizzing tones, peculiar to the instrument on which he played, rang the distant songs of home-returning peasants—a contrast, like that of *their* bright active life, with the dream-life of these blind children.

The boy seemed to feel it. He rose quickly, walked with a firm step to the window—for he knew the room and all its furniture—and said, as he threw back his bright fair locks, “You are incomprehensible, Mary! Our parents and all the village congratulate us. Will it not be a gain after all? Until it was promised me I never asked much about it. We are blind, they say; I never understood what was wanting in us. When we sat without there by the wood, and travellers came by, and said, ‘Poor children!’ I felt angry, and thought, ‘What have they to pity in us?’ But that we are different from others, I know well enough. They often talked about things which I could not understand, yet which must be very beautiful. And now that we are going to know them too, the longing never leaves me day nor night.”

“I was contented as I was,” said Mary, sadly, “I was so happy, and should have liked to be as

happy all my life. It will all be different now ! Have you never heard people complain that the world is full of sorrow and care—and did we know care ?”

“ Because we did not know the world—and I *will* know it at all risks ! I suffered myself to be pleased with groping about in the dark with you, and being obliged to do nothing, but not always ! Often, when my father taught us history, and told us about heroes and bold deeds, I asked him if any of them had been blind ? But whoever had done anything great could see. And then I often plagued myself all day long with thoughts about it. Then when I played on the spinet, or was allowed to play on the organ, in your father’s place, I forgot my uneasiness for a time ; but when it came back, I thought, ‘ Must you always play the organ, and go the few hundred paces up and down the village that you know ; and must no one out of the village ever know you ; and must none ever name you after you are dead ? ’ Look you, Mary,—since the doctor has been at the castle, I hope that I yet may become a perfect man ; and then I will go out into the world and take the path that pleases me, and I shall have nothing to ask any one ! ”

“ And not me, Clement ? ”

She said it uncomplainingly and without reproach. But the boy answered vehemently, “ Sister Mary, do not talk such nonsense—I cannot bear it ! Do *you* think that I would leave you alone at home and

steal away amongst strangers ? Do you not trust me ? ”

“ I know well what happens when young men go from the village to the town, or on their wanderings, no one goes with them, not even their own sisters. And here too, even before they are grown up, the boys run away from the little girls and go into the woods with each other, and mock the girls when they meet them. Till now they have left you and me together, and we played and learned with each other. You were blind like me—what did you want with the other boys ? But when you can see, and want to sit in the house with me, they will laugh at you, as they do at everyone who won’t go with them. And then—then you will go quite away for a long, long time, and I had grown so accustomed to be with you.”

She had spoken the last words with difficulty ; then her sorrow overcame her and she sobbed aloud. Clement drew her closely to him, stroked her cheek, and said entreatingly, “ You *must* not cry ! I will never go away from you ! never ! never ! rather than do that I will remain blind and forget everything. I *will* not leave you if it makes you cry. Come, be calm, be cheerful. You should not heat yourself, the doctor said, because it is so bad for your eyes, darling, darling Mary ! ”

He pressed her closer in his arms and kissed her for the first time in his life. His mother called to



hold, he started—his child had arisen from the bed and pressed her handkerchief to her eyes ; her bosom heaved painfully ; her cheeks and lips were flushed. He spoke to her and entreated her to tell herself, and asked her earnestly, “What has befallen to you ?” She answered but with tears which she herself understood not.

CHAPTER II.

THEY had placed the children in bed in two rooms of the rectory looking towards the north. In the absence of shutters, the windows were carefully covered with dark curtains, so that in the darkest day scarcely a ray of light could creep in. The rector's wide orchard overshadowed the walls, and kept at a distance the murmur of external life. The doctor had recommended that particular care should be taken of the little girl ; all that depended upon him had succeeded ; now, in quiet, must nature do its rest ; and the girl's easily excitable temperament required the most careful attention and precaution. At the decisive moment, Mary had been firm, when her mother burst into tears, as she heard the doctor's footstep on the stairs, she had gone to her mother and encouraged her. The doctor began with the boy, who, excited but

him from the neighbouring parsonage-house. He led the still weeping girl to an arm-chair by the wall, let her sink gently into it and hastened out.

Shortly after, two dignified looking men strode down from the castle-hill towards the village. The rector, a tall, powerful figure, with all the strength and majesty of an apostle, and the sacristan, a slender man with an expression of humility about him, and whose hair was already as white as snow. They had both been invited by the baron to spend the afternoon with himself and the doctor, who had come from the town, at his invitation, to examine the children's eyes, and to try the effects of an operation. He had again assured both the rejoicing fathers of his hopes of a perfect cure, and had begged them to hold themselves in readiness for the following day. The mothers had decided on preparing all that was necessary in the parsonage, for they were unwilling to separate the children on the day which was to restore them that light of which they had been together so long deprived.

When the two fathers reached their homes, which lay just opposite to each other, the rector pressed his old friend's hand, and said with a moistening eye, "God be with us and them!" Then they separated. The sacristan entered his house—all was still—the maid was without in the garden. He entered his chamber and rejoiced in the stillness which permitted him to be alone with his God. As he stepped over the

threshold, he started—his child had arisen from the chair and pressed her handkerchief to her eyes ; her bosom heaved painfully ; her cheeks and lips were blanched. He spoke to her and entreated her to calm herself, and asked her earnestly, “ What has happened to you ? ” She answered but with tears which she herself understood not.

CHAPTER II.

THEY had placed the children in bed in two upper rooms of the rectory looking towards the north. In the absence of shutters, the windows were carefully covered with dark curtains, so that in the brightest day scarcely a ray of light could creep in. The rector’s wide orchard overshadowed the walls, and kept at a distance the murmur of external life.

The doctor had recommended that particular care should be taken of the little girl ; all that depended on him had succeeded ; now, in quiet, must nature do the rest ; and the girl’s easily excitable temperament required the most careful attention and precaution.

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The doctor began with the boy, who, excited but

of good courage, sat down and bore all ; only at first he would not allow anyone to hold him during the operation, but at Mary's entreaties he at last permitted it to be done.

When the doctor, after some seconds had elapsed, removed his hands from the boy's eyelids, he screamed loudly with joyous terror.

Mary recoiled. Then she bore without a murmur the passing pain. But tears burst from her eyes, and her whole frame trembled ; so that the doctor hastily placed a bandage over her eyes, and assisted her himself to her room ; for her knees trembled under her. There, on her couch, sleep and fainting struggled long over her, whilst the boy declared that he was perfectly well, and only lay down at his father's earnest entreaties.

But he did not sleep at once. Coloured forms—coloured now for the first time—glided by him, full of mystery ; forms which, as yet, were nothing to him, and which were to become so much, if the people were right who wished him joy. He asked his father and mother, as they sat by his bedside, about innumerable things, which truly the most profound science could hardly have solved. What does *it* know of the well-springs of life ? His father entreated him to have patience, for with God's help he would soon be able to resolve his doubts more clearly for himself. Now, rest was necessary for him, and above all for Mary, whom

he might so easily awake with his talking. Then he was silent, and listened through the wall. He begged them, in whispers, to open the door, that he might hear whether she slept or was not sighing from pain. His mother did as he wished. Then he lay motionless and listened, and the breathing of his sleeping little friend, as it sighed softly in and out, sang him, too, at last, to sleep.

So they lay for hours. The village without was more quiet than usual. When a peasant had to pass the rectory with his cart, he guarded carefully against noise. Even the children, who may have been told by their master, did not storm out of the school as noisily as was their wont, but went in twos and threes, whispering, and glancing shily at the house, as they passed to more distant play-grounds. Only the song of the birds ceased not among the branches; but when has *its* sound disturbed or wearied a rest-seeking child of man?

The bells of the cows returning from pasture first awakened the two children. The boy's first question was, whether Mary had inquired for him yet? He asked her then, in a low voice, how she was. Her heavy sleep had hardly refreshed her, and her eyes burned under their light covering. But she forced herself to say that she was better, and chatted gaily with Clement, over whose lips streamed the wildest thoughts.

Late, when the moon had already risen from

behind the wood, hesitating little hands knocked at the rector's door. It was the little village girls, who brought a garland of their fairest garden flowers for Mary, and a nosegay for Clement. When they brought them to the boy, his face brightened ; their scent and cool sprinkling of dew refreshed him. "Thank them for me very much. They are good girls ; I am ill now, but when I can see I will defend them against the boys." Mary, when they laid the garland on her bed, pressed it gently back with pale little hands, and said, "I cannot, mother ! I feel giddy when flowers are so near me ! Take them to Clement, too."

She soon sank again into her feverish half-sleep. The wholesome approach of day tranquillized her at last, and the doctor, who came early, found her freer from danger than he had dared to hope. Long he sat by the boy's bedside, listened smiling to his strange questions, warned him kindly to be patient and quiet, and left with the best prognostications.

Much use recommending calmness and patience to one who has at last caught a distant glimpse of a new and highly praised land ! His father was obliged, as often as his duties permitted him, to go up to his room and talk to him. The door then was not to be shut, that Mary might hear the beautiful stories too. Legends of pious men and women on whom God had laid and removed heavy sufferings were repeated. The tale of poor Henry, for whom the pious maiden was

willing in her humility to sacrifice herself, and how God brought all to a happy ending was related, and all the edifying histories which the worthy man was able to recollect.

When the pious rector glided gradually from tale to prayer, or the mother with her clear voice sang a hymn of thanksgiving, Clement folded his hands, or sang with her ; but directly after he began new questionings, which showed that he took more interest in the stories than in the hymns. Mary asked about nothing. She was friendly with every one, and no one suspected what deep thoughts and questions were seething in her little breast.

They grew visibly better from day to day, and on the fourth day after the operation the doctor permitted them to get up. He himself supported the little girl, as she stepped, weak and trembling, across the darkened room towards the open door, in which the boy stood, stretching forth his hands, joyously seeking hers. Then he grasped her hand firmly, and entreated her to lean on him, which she did confidingly.

They paced to and fro in the chamber together, and he, with that delicate sense of locality so peculiar to the blind, guided her carefully past the different pieces of furniture.

“ How are you now ? ” he asked her.

“ I am well,” was her answer, “ to-day as ever.”

“ Come,” he said, quickly, “ lean on me, you are weak still, it would refresh you to breathe a little

sweet meadow air out of doors, for the air here is thick and heavy. But it is not good for us yet, the doctor says. Our eyes would get sore, and be blind again, if they were to look out into the light too soon. Oh, I know already what light and darkness mean. No flute note is so sweet as when your eyes can do that. It hurt me, I must say, yet I could have looked for ever into the beautiful coloured world, so blissful was the pain. You will feel it too. But it must be many days before we are so happy. But then I will do nothing all day long but see. I want to know so many things, Mary. They say that each thing has a different colour. I wonder what colours your face and mine are ? Dark or bright ? It would be horrible if they were not very bright. Shall I know you with my eyes ? now, touching you so, I could pick you out with my little finger from all the other people in the world. But in future we shall have to learn to know each other all anew again. I know now that your hair and cheeks are soft to touch, will they be so to my eyes ? I want to know so much, and it is so long to wait."

After this fashion he chattered incessantly, without remarking how silently she walked beside him. Many of his words had sunk deep into her heart. It had never occurred to her that she too was to see, and she hardly knew what to think about it. She had heard of mirrors, without understanding what was meant. She thought now that when a person

who saw opened his eyes, his own face appeared to him.

When she was again in her little bed, and her mother thought she slept, the idea flashed across her mind. "It would be horrible if our faces were not bright!" She had heard of ugly and beautiful, and she knew that ugly people were pitied, and often less loved than others. "Oh, if I should be ugly," she thought to herself, "and he care no more about me. It used to be all the same when he played with my hair and called it silken threads. That will all cease now if he sees that I am ugly; and he—even if he *is* ugly, I will never let him know it, because I shall love him still. But no! I *know* that he *cannot* be ugly—he *cannot* be."

Long she lay restless with sorrow and anxiety. The air was sultry; without, in the garden, the nightingales called complainingly to each other, and a sobbing west wind beat against the window panes. She was entirely alone in the chamber, for her mother's bed, which had been placed beside hers, had been removed on account of the closeness of the room. And besides, they no longer thought a night watcher necessary, as her fever had entirely disappeared. And just on this very evening it returned again, and tossed her to and fro, until, long after midnight, a short, heavy sleep fell upon her.

Meanwhile the storm, which had circled muttering around the horizon half the night, approached in its

might, spread itself over the forest, and then paused. The wind was still. A crash of thunder burst in upon Mary's sleep. Half dreaming she sprang up ; she knew not what she sought or thought, a nameless anxiety forced her to rise, her pillow was so hot. Now she stood by the side of her bed and heard the strong rain rushing down without. But it cooled not her feverish brow. She tried to collect herself and think, but found nothing within her soul but the miserable thought with which she had fallen asleep. A strange determination arose within her. She would go to Clement now he was alone ; what prevented her from putting an end to her uncertainty, and seeing both herself and him ? She thought but of this alone, and every word of the doctor was forgotten ; so she went unhesitatingly, just as she had arisen from her couch, towards the door which stood half open, found the end of the bed, crept on her little bare feet, to the side of the sleeping boy, and bending over him, with bated breath, tore the bandage hastily from her eyes.

But she started when all remained dark as before. She had forgotten that it was night, and that she had been told that in the night all people were blind. She had fancied that a light streamed from an eye that saw, and lighted both itself and what it looked upon. Now she felt the boy's breath soft upon her cheek, but she could distinguish no form. Already terrified, and in despair, she wished to go back. There

flamed through the now uncovered window-panes a flash one second long—then another and another—the air waved to and fro with the intensity of light—thunder and rain-stream without increased in roar ; but she gazed for one short moment on the curly brow that lay softly pressed on the pillow before her—then the vision vanished into the darkness, her eyes gushed with tears, and, overcome with unspeakable terror, she rushed to her room, replaced the bandage, and sank upon her bed, feeling, with a sense of unalterable conviction, that she had seen for the first and the last time.

CHAPTER III.

WEEKS have passed away. For the first time, the young powers of the eyes are to be tested by light. The doctor, who had, in the meantime, directed the simple treatment of the children from the town, arrived at the village on a cloudy day, in order to be present himself and to enjoy the fruit of his cure with them.

Instead of the curtains, they had weaved garlands of boughs before the windows, and decked both rooms gaily with green branches and flowers. The baron himself, and all in the village who were connected with either of the families, had arrived to

wish both parents and children happiness, and to enjoy the surprise of the healed ones.

Mary pressed herself, with a sad anxiety, amongst the boughs in the corner, when Clement, flushed with delight, was placed opposite to her, and seized her hand.

He had entreated to be allowed to see her first of all. At the same moment they loosed the coverings from their eyes.

A cry of utter inexpressible joy rang from the boy's lips. He remained fixed on the same spot,—a glorified smile upon his face,—moving his bright eyeballs hither and thither. He had forgotten that Mary was to stand before him, and knew not as yet what the human form might be. She, too, did nothing to put him in mind of her. She stood, motionless, only lightly moving her eyelids, which overshadowed bright brown dead eyes. Yet they had no suspicion of the truth. "The wondrous things," they thought, "which seem so strange to her at first, have paralysed her for a time." But when the boy's delight broke loudly forth, they told him "That is Mary :" and he stretched out his hand towards her cheeks in his old manner, and said, "You have a bright face !" Then her tears flowed apace, she shook her head hastily, and said, hardly intelligibly, "It is still dark here ! It is all as it used to be ! "

Who can describe the misery of the next few

hours ! The doctor, deeply affected, led her to a chair by the window, and examined her eyes. The thin grey film of the cataract which he had removed had not reappeared. Nothing distinguished the pupils from those of health but their lifeless sorrowful fixedness.

"The nerve is paralysed," he said, "some sudden vehement light must have destroyed it." The sacristan's wife fainted, she fell pale as death in her husband's arms. Clement at first hardly understood what had happened. His soul was too full of its newly-gained existence. But Mary lay bathed in tears, and would answer none of the doctor's questions. Even later, they could learn nothing from her. "She did not know how it had happened. They must forgive her for having cried so childishly. She would bear all as it had been appointed. Had she ever known anything different ? "

When they had made Clement clearly understand the misfortune, he was beside himself, sprang towards her, and cried incessantly, " You *shall* see too ! I will have nothing more than you ! Ah ! now I know for the first time what you have lost ! One does not see oneself ; but all around have eyes, and look at us as if they loved us. And they shall look at you so too, only be patient and do not cry." And then he asked for the doctor, and rushed to him, beseeching him with tears to help Mary. The bright drops stood in the good man's eyes—he re-

strained himself with difficulty, and persuaded the boy to be tranquil ; “ he would see what could be done,” and gave him hopes, in order to avoid an excitement which might be dangerous for him. He did not conceal the hopeless truth from the parents.

But the boy’s sorrow seemed to have comforted Mary. She sat still by the window, and called him gently to her. “ You must not be so sorry,” she said, “ it all comes from God. Be happy, as I am happy, that you are cured. You know already that I never wished very much for it. And now I should be quite contented if it did not grieve my parents so. But they will grow used to it, and you too, and so it will be as well—if you only love me as you used to do—that I remain as I was.”

He would not be comforted, and the doctor insisted on the children being separated. They took Clement down into the large room below, where the people from the village pressed around him. They shook his hand, one after another, and spoke kindly words ; but the crowd stupified him. He only said, “ Do you know yet that Mary is blind still ? ” and then began to weep afresh.

It was high time to replace the bandage and to take him to a cool and quiet room. There he lay down, exhausted with joy, sorrow, and weeping. His father spoke gently and piously to him, which did him but little good ; even in his sleep he wept, and seemed to dream painfully.

But on the following day, curiosity, desire for information, and astonishment asserted their rights, and his sorrow for Mary only appeared when he happened to see her. He visited her in the early morning and asked her whether she had not altered or got better during the night. But then the bright world that opened itself before him claimed all his attention, and when he returned to Mary it was only to tell her of some new wonder, often checking himself in the midst of his rapid narration, as a glance at his poor little friend reminded him what pain his joy must cost her. But, in truth, it did *not* cause her much pain ; she wanted nothing for herself ; to hear him talk so enthusiastically was pleasure enough for her. But when he began to come more rarely, fancying that he made her sad, or was silent because all other interests vanished before the one on which he did not dare to speak, she became uneasy ; formerly she had seldom been separated from him during the day, now she was much alone. Her mother, indeed, often came to sit with her ; but the cheerfulness of the once lively woman had departed, since her darling hopes had been so rudely crushed ; she could say nothing to her child but mere words of comfort which her own heavy sighs belied, and which could be but of little use to Mary. How much of what she now suffered had she foreseen ? and yet the sense of separation gave her inexpressible pain.

Now she sat often again under the boughs in her

father's garden and span. When Clement came to her, her poor eyes gleamed strangely. He was ever kind to her, sat down on the bench beside her, and caressed her hair and cheeks as in the old times. She begged him once not to be so silent. When he told her about the world and the new things he had learned each day about it, it did not make her feel envious. But when he did not come at all she was so lonely. She never put him in mind, by a single word, of the promise he had given her one evening never to leave her ; she had long ago renounced it. She seemed doubly dear to him, he had no longer to be guarded before her. His heart overflowed, and he talked for hours about the sun and moon and stars, and the flowers, and the trees ; and, above all, how their parents and she herself looked. She trembled with happiness in her inmost heart, when he told her innocently, that she was prettier than all the other girls in the village. Then he told her how graceful she was, and that she had such a pretty head, and dark, soft eyebrows. He had seen himself, too, in a looking-glass, but he was not nearly so pretty ; he did not want to be, and it was all the same to him, as long as he grew up to be a clever man. Men appeared generally not to be so pretty as women. She did not understand all of this, but this much she did understand, that she pleased him, and what could she desire more ?

They never returned to this subject ; but he wa

indefatigable in describing the beautiful world to her. When he came not, she thought over his words, and grew almost jealous of this world which robbed her of him ; gradually this feeling of enmity grew stronger, and, at last, became more powerful than her pleasure at his happiness. Above all things she hated the sun, for she knew that he was the brightest of all, and in her obscure notions, *bright* and beautiful were one and the same thing. Nothing discomposed her more than his bursts of admiration over the setting sun, when he was with her of an evening. He had never spoken of *her* in such words, and why did he forget her so utterly over this scene that he never saw the tears that her strange jealous sorrow forced into her eyes ?

But still heavier grew her heart, when the rector, as soon as the doctor permitted it, began anew the education of his son. Previous to his cure, Clement had passed the greater part of his day in practising music ; religious instruction, history, mathematics, and a little Latin, were all which formerly had appeared necessary or possible ; and Mary had been permitted to share his lessons, which, after all, included only the most necessary information. Now, when the boy exhibited the strongest inclination towards natural science, he was set seriously to work, and prepared for one of the higher classes of the town school.

His steady will worked unceasingly onwards, and

his really superior talents enabled him in a surprisingly short time to bring himself up to his age, and to recover lost time. He sat many hours, even then, with his books, in the sacristan's garden. But the old way of talking was out of the question, and Mary felt, but too well, that she was doubly parted, both from instruction and from the friend of her childhood.

CHAPTER IV.

AUTUMN interrupted for a time the boy's studies. The rector determined to take him with him for some days into the neighbouring mountains, before the winter set in, to show him hill-side and valley, and to let him have a wider look into that world which already seemed so beautiful to him, even on the barren village plains. When the boy was told of it he asked, "And we shall take Mary with us too?"

They tried to dissuade him from it, but without her he refused to travel. "Even if she does not see anything, they say the mountain air is so healthy, and she has been so pale and thin for a long time, and will be quite lonely without me." So they did as he wished ; the little maiden was lifted into the carriage beside him, and a short day's journey brought them to the foot of the mountain range.

Now began the journey on foot. Patiently the boy led his blind little friend, more reserved than ever. Often he longed to climb this or that isolated rock-peak which promised him a new view, but he supported her as she went, and would not desert his post, however much his parents begged him. Only when they had reached some eminence, and were seated at rest in a shady nook, did he leave the maiden, and sought his own way amongst the dangerous rocks, collecting curious stones, or flowers that did not grow in the plains below. When he returned to the resting-place he had ever something for Mary—berries, or a sweet-scented flower, or the soft nest of a bird which the wind had dislodged from its tree.

She received everything cheerfully from him, and seemed more contented than she had been at home. And she was so, too ; for she breathed the same air with him all the day long. But even then her foolish jealousy accompanied her, and she felt angry with the mountains, whose autumnal beauty, she fancied, only made the world dearer to him, and widened the separation between them. Her strange manner struck the rector's wife. She talked with her husband now and again about the child, who was as dear to them as their own, and both placed her obstinate melancholy to the account of her disappointed hopes ; and yet she regretted nothing that had been promised, or that she had been told to expect—only what she had already known and enjoyed.

At the end of the second day's journey they were to pass the night at a lonely house celebrated for the neighbourhood of a magnificent waterfall. They had a long day's journey, and the women were quite tired out. When they reached the house, the rector led his wife within, without proceeding onward to the chasm, from which the roar of the waterfall could be plainly heard. Mary, too, was very tired, but she insisted on following Clement, who cared not to rest so soon ; so they climbed together higher up the steps, and ever louder the sound of the roaring water was borne towards them. Half-way up the steep path Mary's last strength deserted her : "I will sit here," she said ; "go on to the end, and come back for me when you have seen enough." He begged her to let him take her back to the house first, but she was already seated, and so he left her, and advanced towards the roar, deeply affected by the solitude and majesty of the scene.

The girl sat on a stone and awaited his return. She thought that he lingered very long away. A cold shiver struck through her, and the distant muttering thunder of the fall terrified her, "Why does he not come back ?" she thought to herself ; "he will forget me in his joy now as ever. I wish I could find my way back to the house, that I might get warm."

So she sat, full of anxiety, and listening intently. Suddenly she fancied that she distinguished his voice

calling to her ; trembling, she started up. What should she do ? Almost involuntarily she took a step forward, but her foot slipped, she tottered and fell. Fortunately the stones near the path were overgrown with moss, but still the fall nearly stunned her, and she cried wildly for help. In vain ! her voice could not reach Clement, who stood close to the abyss, surrounded by the roarings of the fall, and the house was far too distant. A bitter pain shot through her heart as she lay there between the stones, neglected and helpless. With tears of despair in her eyes, she raised herself painfully. All that she loved best seemed to her at this moment hateful, and the bitterness of her soul permitted no thought of the nearness of the Omnipresent to rise before her.

So Clement found her when, for her sake, he tore himself away from the witchery of the marvellous scene.

“ I come ! ” he cried to her from a distance. “ It is fortunate that you did not go with me. The path above is so narrow that the smallest slip would cost a life ! How unfathomably deep it plunged, and roared and sprang up in clouds of spray, till one’s senses were lost ! Feel how sprinkled I am with the fine water-spray ! —but what is the matter with you ? You are as cold as ice, and your lips tremble. Come —I was wrong to leave you in the chilly air—God forbid that it should have made you ill ! ”

She remained obstinately silent, and permitted

herself to be led back to the house. The rector's wife was alarmed. The girl's sweet, delicate features were strangely disturbed. They hastened to give her a warm draught and to put her in her bed, without learning more from her than that she was not well.

And ill, indeed, she was—and so ill, that she longed for it all to be over. She hated the life that showed itself so hostile to her. In bitter, God-forgotten thinking she lay, and of her own will broke the last threads which bound her to mankind. “I will go out to-morrow,” she said, darkly, to herself; “he shall lead me himself to the cliff where a false step costs a life—and my death will not cost him much! Why should he for ever bear the burden which he has laid on himself out of mere compassion?”

Ever stronger the unholy determination twined itself about her heart. What had become of the old bright, loving courage in this short month of concealed sorrow? She even thought on the consequences of her sin without horror, and said, defyingly, to herself, “They will manage to become reconciled to it as they have become reconciled to my remaining blind, and he will be freed from that picture of misery that destroys all his pleasure in that beautiful world he loves so much.” That was ever the last thought when a feeling of uncertainty rose within her.

In the room next to hers, only separated from it by a thin partition, sat the rector and his wife. Clement was still loitering about under the trees

without, unable to tear himself from the stars, and the mountains, and the muffled music of the waterfall.

"I feel very uneasy," said the rector's wife, "at Mary's being so sad and reserved; the slightest occurrence agitates her. If it lasts she will be quite worn out. I wish you would talk to her, and try to persuade her not to take what cannot be altered so deeply to heart."

"I am afraid that I should speak in vain," said the rector. "If what she has already been taught, and the love of her parents, and our daily care of her, have not spoken to her heart, mere human words will be of no avail. If she had learned humility before God, she would have submitted to his will, which has left her so much to be thankful for, with gratitude instead of murmuring."

"But he has taken much from her."

"Ay, indeed! but not all, or for ever! That is my hope and my prayer. The power of loving, and of looking on all as worthless compared to the love of God and man, seems to have gone from her; but it returns when we return to God! As she now is she longs not for him, she hugs her discontent and hatred too closely to her heart—but her heart is too true to bear this miserable companionship much longer; then when it is free from discontent, God will enter into it, and love will find its old place again, and then she will have an inward light

to guide her, though night may still hang before her eyes."

"God grant it! And yet the thought of her future makes me very unhappy."

"She will not be lost, if she is not determined to lose herself. Even were all who now love her and tend her to be called away, all human kindness would not have died. And if she marks well the hand of God, and the way He would lead her, she will bless her blindness, which from her childhood upwards has kept her from the false glitter of the world, and brought her nearer to what is true."

¶ Clement interrupted the conversation. "You cannot think," he cried, "how beautiful the night is. I would give one of my eyes, if Mary could have it, to see this glory of the stars! I hope the noise of the waterfall does not keep her awake. I cannot forgive myself for letting her sit so long in the cold."

"Speak lower, dearest son," said the mother; "she is sleeping close to us, and the best thing you can do is to go to rest too."

Whisperingly the boy bade them "Good-night!" When his mother went into Mary's room, she found her tranquil, and apparently sleeping. That strange expression of her features had given place to a sweet tranquillity. The storm had passed over, and had destroyed nothing of the beautiful within her. Even shame and regret hardly made themselves felt, so

powerfully reigned within her the joyous peace which had been preached to her from the neighbouring room. For the evil gains its influence over us slowly and creepingly ; the victory of the good is soon decided.

CHAPTER V.

HER friends remarked with astonishment, the next morning, the change which had passed over her. The rector's wife could not but believe that Mary had overheard their conversation through the partition.

"So much the better," said the rector ; "now I shall have nothing more to say." Most moving was the lovingness of manner which Mary showed towards Clement and his parents. She wished for nothing more than to be permitted to belong to them. She received their love almost with surprise, as something to which she had no claim.

She did not, indeed, speak much more than before, but what she said was cheerful and kindly. There was a deprecating shrinking expression about her whole being, as if she was silently entreating forgiveness. She took Clement's arm again when they walked. She often begged that she might be allowed to sit down and rest, not that she was tired, but in order to leave the boy in freedom to clamber where

he would. She smiled when he returned and told her all that he had seen : her old jealousy had disappeared since she had begun to demand nothing more for herself than the happiness of knowing him happy.

Thus strengthened and fortified, she ended the journey. And happy for her that she was so strengthened ; for, when she arrived at home, she found her mother lying ill of a dangerous complaint, which ended fatally a few days after her return. And now, after the acute sorrow of the first few weeks had become lessened, her sad and altered life demanded duties from her which formerly she would hardly have been equal to. Her household cares occupied her early and late. In spite of her privation, she knew every cranny of the small house thoroughly, and if she herself was but seldom able to help with her own hands, yet she was clever and full of forethought in ordering all things so that her sorrowing father should want for nothing. A wonderful power and confidence came over her. Where in old times it had taken many a squabble to induce man and maid to do what was right, now a single gentle word from her sufficed. And if anything wrong happened, or work was done with an ill will, a steady glance from those large blind eyes quelled the most rebellious.

Since she felt that she must be cheerful for the sake of her father—since she understood that she

must work and shape her life herself—the hours became ever rarer in which she felt the separation from Clement so painfully ; and at last, when he was obliged to go to the high school in the town, she was able to say farewell to him, even more composedly than the others. It is true that she went about for weeks as in a dream—as if the best half of her being had been torn away from her. But soon she was as cheerful as before, sang her favourite songs to herself, and rallied her father till she won a smile from him. When the rector's wife came across with letters from the town; and read her news and messages from Clement, her heart beat quickly, and she lay longer at night without sleep visiting her eyelids. The next morning she was bright and cheerful as before.

At the vacation Clement returned to his parents, and his first walk was to the sacristan's house. Mary distinguished his step already in the distance, remained fixed where she was, and listened whether he would ask for her. She smoothed her hair, which still rolled in tresses down her slender neck, hastily with her hands, and rose from her work. As he entered the door every trace of excitement had vanished from her features. Cheerfully she gave him her hand, and begged him to sit near her and to talk to her. Then he forgot how the time flew by, and had to be called by his mother, who begrudged his long absence from her ; for he seldom remained the whole vacation

at the village, but wandered into the mountains, to which his growing affection for natural science attracted him.

The years rolled on their accustomed way ; the old people withered slowly, and the young ones bloomed rapidly. When Clement returned once again at Easter, and Mary arose from her spinning wheel, he was astonished to see how tall and stately she had grown since the autumn. " You are quite a woman," he said ; " and I, too, am no longer a child ; only feel how my beard has grown over my winter studies." A blush flitted across her cheek as he took her hand and placed it on his chin, to let her feel the newly-sprung down. He had, too, many more things to tell her than the first time he returned. The tutor with whom he lived had daughters, and these daughters had lady friends. He was obliged to describe them one and all with the greatest accuracy. " I can make nothing out of the girls," he said ; " they are silly and frivolous, and chatter too much. There is one, Cecilia, that I can endure a little better than the others, because she can hold her tongue, and does not make grimaces in order to look pretty. But what do they bother me for ? The other evening, when I went into my room, I found a bunch of flowers on my table, and let it lie, and never took the trouble to put it in water, though I was sorry for the flowers ; but it annoyed me. And the next day there was such a giggling and whis-

pering amongst the girls that I could not speak to them for anger. Why cannot they leave me alone? They know that I have no time for their nonsense!"

Not one word of all this did Mary lose, and spun an endless thread of strange thoughts out of it. She was almost in danger of injuring herself with fruitless dreamings, if a too well grounded cause of anxiety and real sorrow had not saved her. Her father, who had for a long time been able to do his duty with difficulty, had a paralytic stroke, and lay nearly a year perfectly helpless, until a second attack put an end to his sufferings. Not for an hour did his child leave his side. Even when the vacations brought Clement home again, she only permitted herself to talk to him during his short visits to the sick-room.

She grew ever more firm, ever more self-denying. She complained to no one, and would have required the help of none had her blindness permitted her to do all herself. And thus her misfortune, which had tutored her soul, accustomed her also to household duties, neglected by many a seeing one. She kept the strictest order over all things of which she had the care, and no amount of cleanliness could satisfy her, as she was unable to judge by the eye when the least speck of dust was removed. The tears sprang into Clement's eyes when he saw her busied washing her crippled father, or combing out his thin

locks. She had grown pale in the close air of the sick-room ; but her brown eyes had a deeper light from that very cause, and in all her common household work, the true nobility of her whole being only became the more evident.

The old man died, his successor took possession of the cottage, and Mary found a welcome refuge in the rectory. Clement, who in the mean time had gone to a distant university, and who was unable to visit home twice a-year as formerly, was informed of all these changes by letters, which reached him but rarely, and were answered irregularly. Now and then his letters contained a note for Mary, in which he expressed himself condescendingly and jestingly, so unlike his old self, and addressed her as if she were still a child, so that his mother shook her head and said nothing of it before his father. Mary had these strange letters carefully read to her, begged them, and preserved them.

After her father's death she received a short excited letter from him, in which he neither endeavoured to comfort her nor said a word showing a participation with her sorrow, only earnest entreaties to take care of her health, and to be quiet, and to let him know exactly how she was. This was in winter, and this letter the last to Mary. They expected a visit from him at Easter. He remained away, and wrote that he could not resist the opportunity of accompanying a celebrated professor on a botanical

tour. His father was satisfied, and Mary succeeded at last in calming the mother's disappointment.

He arrived unannounced at Whitsuntide on foot, untired by a long march since daybreak, with healthy cheeks, and he was a full-grown man. So he entered the quiet house, in which his mother was sitting alone, for it was the Saturday evening before the feast-day. With a cry of joy the startled woman clasped him round the neck. "So you," she cried, as she loosened herself from his arms, and took a step backwards to measure the long absent one with the full gaze of love, "So you have returned to us once again, unkind, forgetful one. You still remember the way to your father and mother. God be praised ! I thought that you had made up your mind never to return till you were a professor, and then perhaps my poor old eyes might never have rejoiced in the sight of you again *here below*. But I will not scold you. You are faithful. You are the old Clement. And you will give me such a Whitsun feast as I have not had for many a day, to me and your father, and to us all.

"Mother," he said, "how happy I am to be here once again ! I could not bear at last to remain longer away. I do not know how it happened, I made no resolution beforehand. I felt that I must get home. One bright morning, instead of going to lecture, I walked through the town-gates, and strode away as if I fled from sin. I accomplished such journeys

as I had never made before, good as I used to be on foot. Where is my father ? where is Mary ? ”

“ Don’t you hear him,” said the mother, “ your father is above in his study.” They heard the firm step of the old man as he paced to and fro above them. “ All is as it used to be,” continued the mother. “ That has been his Saturday’s walk for the twenty years that I have known him. And Mary is out in the field with our people. I have sent her out because she will not let me do anything. When she is at home she would make me sit in the corner with my hands in my lap, if she had her own way, and do everything herself. We have some new servants now, and I like her to look over them until they have got used to her. How astonished she will be to find you here ! But come, I will bring you to your father, just to let him see you, and it will soon be dinner time. Come, he will not be angry at *your* disturbing him.”

She led her son, stepping lightly before him, but still holding his hand in hers, up the stairs. Gently she opened the door, beckoned to Clement, and stepping backwards herself, pushed him in. “ There he is,” she cried ; “ at last you have him.” The old man started as out of deep thought. “ Who ? ” he asked, almost impatiently. Then he looked in his son’s face, brightly lighted by a gleam of sun. “ Clement,” he cried, between astonishment and joy, “ you here ? ” “ I longed for home,” said the son,

and pressed the proffered hand warmly. "I shall stay here for the feast, father, if you have room for me, now that Mary is under your roof." "How can you talk so," interrupted his mother, quickly; "if I had seven sons I could find place for them all. But I will leave you to your father. I must go to the kitchen and the garden, they will have spoilt you in the town, you must be content for love's sake." She was already gone, as the father and son stood silently opposite each other. "I have disturbed you," said Clement, at last; "you were writing your sermon; tell me if I shall go." "You only disturb one who has disturbed himself. Since this morning have I paced to and fro, thinking on my text, but grace was not with me, and the grain hath not brought forth. I have felt strangely; a gloom is over me that I cannot shake off." He went to the little window that looked out towards the church, the way to which lay through the churchyard. There it glowed tranquil with its flowers and glittering crosses in the midday sun. "Come here, Clement," said the old man, gently; "place yourself by me. Do you see that grave to the left, with primroses and monthly roses? You have never seen that one before. Do you know who sleeps there? My good, true friend, the father of our Mary!" He left the window at which his son, deeply struck, remained standing. He paced again to and fro through the chamber, and in the silence they could hear the sand crackle under

his steady tread. "Aye!" said the old man, with a deep sigh, "no one knew him as I knew him; no one gained so much from him, no one lost so much with him as I did. What knew he of the world and its wisdom; that is but folly before God. What he knew was all revealed to him from within, and from the Holy Book, and from sorrow. He has become blessed, because he *was* blessed."

After a pause he spoke again: "Whom have I now to shame when I am proud of heart, and save me when my faith wavers; and to decide the thoughts that accuse and excuse me? The world grows too wise for me! What I hear I understand not, and what I read my soul *will* not understand, for it is grief to it! How many rise up and think that they speak with tongues? and, behold! it is but lip-work! And the mockers hear it and rejoice therein. Mine old friend, would I were where thou art."

Clement turned. He had never before heard his father talk of the sorrows of his own soul. He went to him and sought for words of consolation. "Cease, my son," said the old man, checking him, "What can *you* give me, that Heaven could not have given me better? See, it was shortly after his death, I slept above here. The night awoke me with its storm and rain; I felt sad, even to death; then he appeared to me—a light shone about him—he was

in his garments as when he lived—he spoke not, but stood at the foot of my bed, and looked calmly down upon me. At first, it oppressed me sorely! I was not enough grown in grace to look on the face of a glorified being. The next day I felt the peace that it had left behind it. From that time it came not again until last night. I had been reading a book in the evening, blasphemous against God and God's word; I had gone to my bed in anger—then it was that, after midnight, I again started suddenly from my sleep, and he stood before me—dressed as at the first time, but with the Bible in his hand, open, and written with letters of gold. He pointed to a passage with his finger, but there came a gleam from out the leaves, so that I gazed on it in vain, and for the fullness of the light could read never a word! I drew myself nearer to him, half rising up; he stood—pity and love in his face, which changed to grief as I strove to read and could not. Then the tears sprang to my eyes—from the brightness, they grew dark—and he vanished softly away, and left me weeping."

The old man had gone again to the window, and Clement saw a strong shudder pass over him. "Father!" he cried, and seized his nerveless hand—it was damp and cold; "Father, you alarm me! You should send for the physician."

"To the physician!" cried the old man, almost

angrily, and stretched himself up in every limb, "I am well. Therein it lies. My soul longs and strives for death, and my body selfishly withstands it ! "

"These dreams, father, agitate you."

"Dreams ! I tell you that I was awake, as I am at this moment."

"I do not doubt, father, that you were awake ; but so much the more does this severe attack, which pursues you with visions even when you are awake, alarm me. See ! even now you are quite overcome by the mere recollection, and your pulse rises. I know, little of a doctor as I am, that you had fever last night and are under its influence now."

"And you think that you know as much as *that* poor worm ! " cried the old man. "Oh, the marvellous wisdom ! Oh, the gracious science ! But what right have I to complain ? Do I not deserve punishment for blurting out God's secrets, and making my full heart a mark for the scorner ? Is *this* the fruit of your learning ? Do you expect to gather figs from this bramble ? But I know you well—you miserable ones, who make new gods for the people, and in your hearts worship yourselves alone—your days are numbered."

He went towards the door ; his bare forehead was flushed. He did not look towards Clement, who stood gazing on the floor ; suddenly he felt his father's hand on his shoulder.

"Tell me openly, my son, are you as far gone

already as those whose ravings I have read of with shuddering? Do you already hold, with those sleek materialists, that the miracle is ridiculous, and the *spirit* but a tale told from one to another, and to which man listens? Has neither thy youth, nor the seeds of thankfulness God sowed in your heart, been able to choke those weeds? Answer me, Clement!"

"Father," said the young man, after some consideration, "how shall I answer you this thing? I have dedicated my whole life to the consideration of this question. I have heard it decided in different ways, by men whose opinions I revere. Amongst my dearest friends are some who think what you condemn. I hear and learn and do not venture as yet to decide."

"He who is not for me is against me, saith the Lord."

"How can I be against *Him*? How can I be against the *Spirit*? Who ventures to ignore the spiritual, even though he binds it to the material? Do not its miracles remain what they were, even though they may be the result of natural causes? Is it a disgrace to a noble statue that it is hewn out of stone?"

"You speak like them all; so they intoxicate you with dark similes, so they deafen you with high sounding words, that you may not hear the still small voice within you; and you have come to keep Whitsuntide holy with *us*?"

" I came because I loved you."

There was silence between them. Several times the old man opened his mouth as if about to speak, and then pressed his lips firmly together again. They heard Mary's voice below in the house, and Clement stepped, listening, back from the window, at which he had been standing sorrowfully. " It is Mary," said the old man ; " have you forgotten *her* too ? Did the recollection of your childhood's playmate never pass before your soul, when your blasphemous companions endeavoured to destroy your pure, godly childishness of heart with their miserable sneers ? Did *she* never remind you of the wonders the spirit can perform—even when it is deprived of sense—alone, out of itself. I should say of God, in a humble heart, which is rich in faith ? "

Clement repressed the answer which rose ready to his lips. They heard the light step of the blind girl on the stairs. The door opened, and with flushing cheek Mary stood on the threshold ; " Clement," she cried, fixing the bright brown eyes on the spot where he really stood. He approached her and took the hand that waited for his. " Oh ! what pleasure you have given your parents ! Welcome, welcome ! How quiet you are ! " she added.

" Dearest Mary, yes, I am here once again. I was *obliged* to come to see you all. How well you look, and you have grown so tall."

" I have gained a fresh life since the spring. The

winter was heavy for me. I am so happy with your father and mother, Clement! Good day, dearest father," she added, "we went out so early that I could not press your hand;" she took it now. "Go below my child;" said the old man, "Clement will go with you—you can show him your garden. There is yet a little time before dinner. Think on my words, Clement."

The young people went. "What is the matter with the father?" asked Mary, when they were below. "His voice sounded strangely, and yours too. Was he angry with you?"

"I found him excited. He seems ill. Has he not complained of anything?"

"Not to me; but he has been restless, and sometimes silent for hours together. It struck my mother, too. Has he been harsh towards you?"

"We had a discussion about serious things; he asked me, and I could not deny my opinions."

The girl became thoughtful; not until they reached the open air did her face brighten. "Is it not beautiful here?" she asked, spreading out her hands.

"I really did not recognize it again," he answered. "What a wonderful place you have made out of the little barren spot! Ever since I can remember there were only a few fruit trees, and mallows and alders; and now it is full of roses!"

"Yes," she said. "Your mother used not to

care about the garden then, and now she delights in it. The sacristan's son, who has learned gardening in the town, gave me the first rose bush, and planted it himself ; then we added others and now it is quite beautiful. But the finest are not in flower yet."

" And you take care of them yourself ? "

" You are astonished at it, because I cannot see," she said gaily ; " but I understand what is good for plants. I can tell by the scent when one is fading, or going out of flower, or wants watering ; they always tell me. But, indeed, I cannot gather you a flower ; for they prick my fingers."

" I will do it for you," he said, and broke off a spray from one of the monthly roses. She took it. " You have gathered so many buds with it ! " she said. " I will keep one for myself, and place it in water. Take the blooming one again for yourself."

They wandered along the trim paths till the mother called them to table. Clement was reserved before his father ; but Mary, usually so shy at taking part in the conversation, had to-day a hundred things to tell and to ask about. Even the old man gradually lost the impression of his first conversation with his son, and the old trusting feeling soon regained its place between them again.

But during the next day it was impossible to avoid fresh causes of dissension. The old man wished to be enlightened on the state of theology at the

University, and the conversation soon wandered to more general subjects. The more Clement tried to avoid disagreeable points, the more vehemently the old man pressed him. Many an anxious involuntary glance from his mother sustained him, indeed, in his determination to avoid definite explanations ; but when he parried a question, or answered with an unmeaning word, the enforced silence wrung his very heart. Mary managed, even, to revive the old tone again for a time ; but he saw that she too suffered, and avoided her when he met her alone, for he knew that she would have asked him, and felt that from her he could conceal nothing. A shadow seemed to pass over him when he came into her presence. Was it the recollection of that childish promise to which he had been so untrue ? Was it the belief that in the difference of opinion which had estranged him from his parents, she ranged herself silently on their side ? And yet he felt a yearning towards her which grew ever more irresistible—a longing which he could not ignore, and which he struggled against fiercely ; for he was full of his science and of his prospects, and avoided, with the selfishness of fancied inward strength, all that might clog his onward way.

“ I will be a traveller,—a foot traveller,” he often said to himself. “ I must carry a light bundle ! ” It made him heavy at heart when he contemplated the possibility of his being chained to a wife, who

would demand a part of his being for herself. And a *blind* wife! One that he must always fear to leave for a moment! Here in the village, where all went on its simple way, and to which she had been accustomed since her childhood, *here* she was protected from all the confusing accidents which she could not fail to encounter in the town. So he persuaded himself that he should do *her* an injustice if he married her: whether he grieved *her* or not by his determination, was a point that he avoided considering.

He expressed himself still more openly when he departed. On the last day, when he had embraced his parents, and had been told that Mary was in the garden, he left a farewell for her, and with beating heart went down the village street, and then crossed, sideways, over the fields towards the forest. The garden opened into the fields too, and his nearest way would have been through a little wicket-gate. He made a wide *détour*. But when he reached the fields, he was unable to follow the narrow path through the springing corn without casting one glance round; so he stood still in the mild sunshine, and looked back over the huts and the houses. Behind the hedge which surrounded his father's garden, he saw the slender figure of the blind girl. Her face was turned towards him, but she dreamed not that he was so near her. Hot and hasty sprang the tears to his eyes; but he repressed them with a powerful effort. Then he sprang like a madman

over the ditches and paths back to the hedge. She started. "Farewell, Mary!" he said, with a clear voice, "I am going away again, perhaps for a year!" He passed his trembling hand over her forehead and temples.

"Farewell! You are going?" she said. "One thing I beg of you,—write oftener to your parents; your mother longs for it so; and send me a greeting, too, sometimes."

"Yes;" he answered, absently. Then he departed.

"Clement!" she cried, once again, after he had left her. He heard her, but did not look round. "It is well that he did not hear me," she said gently to herself. "And what had I to say to him?"

CHAPTER VI.

FROM that day the son never remained long at his father's house. Each time he came he found his father harsher and more impatient—his mother ever with the same love, but more reserved towards him—Mary, tranquil, but silent when the men spoke; she also showed herself but seldom.

On a bright day late in autumn, we find Clement once more in the room in which, as a boy, he had passed the time devoted to his cure. One of his friends

and fellow-students had accompanied him ; they had both passed the usual time at the University, and they were just returned from a long journey, in the course of which Wolf had been unwell, and wished to recruit himself in the quiet of the village. Clement was obliged to acquiesce, although, amongst all his friends, this was the very one he thought most unlikely to suit his father. He managed, however, to fall into the ways of thinking of the old people with unexpected tact and dexterity, and particularly won the mother's heart by the lively interest he pretended to take in all household matters ; he was also able to give her many little bits of advice, and relieved a complaint under which she laboured by some simple remedy ; for he had prepared himself to succeed an old uncle who was an apothecary, a profession for which his inclinations and acquirements really unfitted him ; yet he was of an easy disposition and delighted to be quiet and to enjoy himself from time to time. He had never had much real feeling in common with Clement, and so at his first step into the rectory he felt himself in an utterly strange atmosphere, and would certainly have seized the smallest excuse for leaving a circle which constrained and wearied him, had not the blind girl struck him, at the first glance, as a remarkable problem to be solved. It is true she avoided him as much as she could. The first time he took her hand she withdrew it from his with an inexpressible disquietude, and quite lost her self-com-

mand, yet he hung about her for hours at a time, watched her way of managing affairs, and examined with a gay recklessness, which it was impossible to be angry with, the means by which she kept up a communication with the outer world, and studied the way in which the senses she had preserved, made up for the one she had lost ; he could not understand why Clement thought so little of her. *He*, however, avoided meeting her more than ever, and particularly when he found her in Wolf's company ; then he grew pale and turned away, and the villagers often met him in lonely forest paths, seemingly lost in gloomy reveries.

He was returning one evening from a melancholy distant wandering, and had just passed from the wood into the corn-fields, when he met Wolf advancing towards him. Wolf was more excited than usual. After a long visit to Mary, who had interested him even more than ever, he had gone to the little village inn, and had drunk so much of the country wine, that he took a fancy to wander about the fields in the cool of the evening to refresh himself.

" You will not get rid of me so soon ! " he cried to Clement. " I must study your little blind witch a little more first ; she is cleverer than a dozen women in the town, who only use their eyes to ogle God's man ; and now she keeps me in order ; it is really marvellous ! "

"So much the better for you if she tames you a little," said Clement, sharply.

"Tame! that she will never make me! when I look at her, and her graceful figure and beautiful face, faith, it is not to grow tamer! Don't believe that I would do her any harm; but do you know that I sometimes think that if she did ever love any one, it would be a wonderful love; one like her, who sees not, only *feels*, and such *feeling*, so delicate and strong and charming, such as one never can find elsewhere; he will be a happy man round whose neck she throws her arms!"

"You would do better to keep your thoughts to yourself."

"Why? whom do they harm? and whom should I injure if I were to make her, at least, a little in love with me, just to see how the nerves will extricate themselves out of the difficulty? so much of the inner fire is usually cooled by the eyes—but here—"

"Beware how you try experiments upon her!" Clement burst out. "I tell you solemnly, that for the future, I will neither hear nor see aught of this—so beware!"

Wolf cast a keen side-long glance at him, seized his arm, and said laughing, "I really believe that you are in love with the girl and want to keep the experiment for yourself. How long have you grown so particular? you used to listen readily enough when I said what I thought of women."

"I am not your teacher ! What have I to do with your foul thoughts ? But I think that I *have* a right to prevent your sullyng one with them who is so dear to me, and who is a thousand times too pure to breathe the same air with you."

"Oho ! oho !" said Wolf, carelessly. "Too good ! too good ! you are a fine fellow, Clement ! a very fine fellow ! out of my sunshine, my dear boy."

He gave him a slight blow and turned away. Clement stood still ; his cheeks grew suddenly pale. "You shall explain what you mean by these words," he said sternly.

"Not such a fool ! ask others if you want to know. You will soon find one who has a greater fancy to preach to deaf ears than I have."

"What do you mean ? Who are the others ? Who dares to speak ill of her ? Who ?"

He held Wolf with a hand of iron. "Fool !" growled Wolf, angrily ; "you spoil my walk with your tedious cross-questionings. Let me go free !"

"Not from this place do you move till you have given me an explanation ;" said Clement, wild with rage.

"Indeed ! Go and settle it with the sacristan's son if you happen to be jealous; poor devil ! to go on with him till he was ready to jump out of his skin, and then to give him his marching orders. Pah ! is that honourable ? He complained to me, and I consoled him. She is just like other women, I told him, a coquette. Now she is trying it on upon me, but

we know how to manage matters, and are not going to let our mouths be shut, and have other good fellows fall into the same snare."

"Retract your words!" shouted Clement, almost beside himself, shaking Wolf violently by the arm.

"Why? It is true, and I can prove it. Go—you are a child!"

"And you—are a scoundrel!"

"Oho! now it is your turn to eat your words."

"I retract not a syllable!"

"Then you know the consequences. You shall hear from me as soon as I get to town."

Therewith he turned coolly away from him and went towards the village. Clement stood for a time rooted to the spot. "Miserable wretch!" burst from his lips. His bosom laboured violently—a bitter agony nested within it. He threw himself upon the ground amongst the corn, and lay long, recalling a thousand times over each word which had so terribly moved him.

When he returned to the house late in the evening, he found, contrary to his expectation, that the family were still together.

Wolf was not there. The old man paced with firm steps through the chamber; his mother and Mary sat with their work in their laps, contrary to the custom of the house at so late an hour. When Clement entered, his father paused in his walk, and turned his head gravely towards him.



“ What has passed between you and your friend ? He departed whilst we were in the fields, and has left but a scanty greeting behind him ; when we returned home we found a messenger removing his luggage. Have you quarrelled ? Why else should he have left this house so hastily ? ”

“ We had a dispute. I am happy not to find him under this roof.”

“ And what did you quarrel about ? ”

“ I cannot tell you, father. I would willingly have avoided it ; but there are things which an honest man cannot hear spoken. I long knew that he was wild, and spared neither himself nor others ; but I never saw him before as he was to-day.”

The father looked steadily at his son, and asked in a low voice—

“ And how will it be arranged ? ”

“ As is the custom amongst men of honour,” answered Clement, firmly.

“ Do you know how *Christians* are accustomed to arrange quarrels ? ”

“ I do know, but cannot do it. If he had insulted me, I could have forgiven him, and spared him his punishment ; but he has slandered one who is dearer to me than myself.”

“ A woman, Clement ? ”

“ Yes, a woman ! ”

“ And you love this woman ? ”

“ I love her ! ” said the young man, in a low voice.

"I thought that it was thus," cried the old man. "The town has destroyed you. You have become one of the children of this world, following after strange women, and swaggering for them, and making of them the false idols of your folly! But I tell you that, so long as I live, I will labour to bring you back to the Lord, and will shatter your idols! Has God wrought a miracle in you that you should deny him? Aye, it were better that you sate still in darkness, and that the door had for ever remained shut through which the spirit of lies has crept into your heart!"

The young man restrained himself with difficulty. "Who has given you the right, father," he cried at last, "who has given you the right of accusing me of ignoble inclinations? Because I must do what must be done in this world to restrain the insolence of the base, am *I* therefore base? There are different ways of fighting against the spirit of evil. Yours is the way of peace, because you have to deal with men in the aggregate. I stand opposed to a single man, and know what I have to do."

"*Thou* canst not change him," the old man cried angrily: "wilt thou tread God's ordinances under thy feet? He is no son of mine who raises his hand against his brother. I forbid the meeting in the strength of my priestly and paternal power. Beware how you brave it."

"So you cast me from your house," said Clement

gloomily. The mother, who had burst into tears, arose, and rushed towards her son. "Mother," he said sternly, "I am a man, and may not be false to myself." He approached the door, and glanced over towards Mary, who sought him sorrowfully with her great blind eyes. His mother followed him; her sobs choked her voice. "Do not retain him, wife," cried the old man; "he is no longer a child of ours if he be not a child of God. Let him go whither he will; he is dead to us."

Mary heard the door shut, and the mother fall to the ground with a cry from her inmost mother's heart. Then the palsied feeling which had kept her seated went from her. She arose, went to the door, and with a powerful effort bore the fainting woman to her bed. The old man stood by the window and spoke not a word; his clasped hands trembled violently.

A quarter of an hour later, some one knocked at the door of Clement's room. He opened it, and Mary stood before him. The room was in confusion. She struck her foot against his travelling trunk, and said sorrowfully, "What are you going to do, Clement?" Then his rigid grief gave way; he seized her hands, and pressed his eyes, in which the hot tears stood, against them. "I *must* do it," he said; "I have long felt that I have lost his love; perhaps he will feel, when I am far away from him, that I have never ceased to be his son."

She raised him up. “ Do not weep so, or I shall never have the strength to utter what I *must* say. Your mother would say it, did your father not forbid her. The sound of his voice told me how hard it was for him to be so stern ; but thus he will remain. I know him well. He believes that his sternness is a duty to God, to make him offer up his own heart as a sacrifice.”

“ And do *you* think that it is required of him ?”

“ No, Clement ! I know but little of the world, and know not the nature of the laws which force men of honour to fight. But I know you well enough to know that the mere opinion of the world would never prevent your considering honestly what is right and what is wrong—even in this case. You may owe it to the world, and to the woman you love ;—but still, you owe more to your parents than to either. I know not the girl they have slandered, and may not be able quite to understand the depth of the pain it must give you not to do all for her.—Do not interrupt me. Do not think that I have any fear that for her sake you might withdraw from me those last scanty remains of friendship these last years of separation have spared me.—I give you up utterly to her, if she but makes you happy.—But you have no right to do, even for her sake, what you contemplate doing, even were she a thousand times dearer to you than father or mother. You have no right to leave your father’s house in anger, and so close the door

for ever on yourself. Your father is old, and will take his opinions to the grave with him. He would have had to sacrifice the essence and substance of his whole life if he had given way. You sacrifice to him the passing respect that you may possess in the eyes of strangers. For if the girl you love so can desert you because you refuse to bring down your father's gray hairs in sorrow to the grave, she has never, never been worthy of you"—

Her voice failed her. He had thrown himself on a chair, and groaned bitterly. She stood ever near the door, and waited for his answer. Across her brow lay a strange anxious expression, as if she listened even to him with her very eyes. Suddenly he sprang up, laid his hands upon her shoulders, and cried, "It was for *thee* that I would have done it, and for *thy* sake alone will conquer my own heart!" Then he rushed past her, and down the narrow stairs.

She remained above. His last words had quivered in her very soul, and a stream of blissful thoughts swept through her fearful, half-incredulous heart. She seated herself trembling on the travelling-trunk. "For thee! For thee!" still rang in her ears. She almost feared his return. If he should have meant differently?—and how was it possible that he should not mean differently? What was she to him?

At last she heard him returning—her agitation gained on her; she arose, and moved towards the

door. He entered, clasped her in his arms, and told her all !

"It is *I* who am blind," he cried ; "*you* are the seeing one—the prophetess ! What were I now without thy light ? Lost for all eternity ! driven from all the hearts I love through mine own miserable blindness ! And now—now—all again mine—aye, and more than I knew of—more than I dared to hope for !"

She hung mute and agitated upon his neck ; all her long-suppressed love burst forth, and glowed in her kisses, despising the tepid rendering of mere words.

The day dawned upon their happiness.

Now he learned, too, what she had so long kept silent, and what this same room had seen, in which they now, for ever irrevocably united, pressed each other's hands, and parted in the light of the breaking day.

In the course of the day a letter arrived from Wolf, dated the night before, from the next village. "Clement need not trouble himself," he wrote. "He retracted all he had said ; he knew best that it was all an idle lie ; anger and wine had put it into his head. He had really thought, when he saw him so cold about it, that it would only have cost him a word to win the girl ; and when he saw that Clement was in earnest, he had slandered what he felt was for ever beyond his reach. He should not think him

worse than he was, and excuse him to the girl and his parents, and not quite give him up for ever."

When Clement read these lines to Mary, she said, with some emotion, "I only pity him. I never felt comfortable when he was near me, and how much he might have spared both us and himself! But I can think of him calmly now. How much have I to thank him for!"



MARION.

WHEN holy Saint Louis wore the crown of France, the good old town of Arras was just six hundred years younger than it is now. That she was a thousand times merrier she had to thank, not her youth alone, but, before even that, the noble guild of poets who resided within her walls, and who, by their ballads and miracle-plays, and pleasant rhyming romances, spread her fame over all fair France.

Now it happened one early spring about the time, that in a garden in Arras, behind the house of one of these valiant singers, a young woman was busied tying up vines to their trellises. She was beautifully formed, of that pleasant roundness that usually indicates a cheerful soul within, and she had a sweet, gentle face. Her calm dark eyes swept now and then over the garden as if they knew neither joy nor sorrow ; but her hands were active and dreamed not. After the fashion of well-to-do townswomen, she wore her fair hair adorned with many an artful ribbon ornament, and her gown was tucked up for work, and, perhaps, possibly also, for the sake of her darling little feet.

As the charming vision wandered in her tranquil activity still further into the garden, there appeared at the door of the house which opened into it, a man, who formed both in face and manner a most remarkable contrast to her. He was of middle size, with a keen eye, and irregular features. His black cloak indifferently concealed his high left shoulder, and his legs seemed to have been made after very different patterns. But still his figure, however incongruous its parts might seem, was brought into a striking unison by the boldness and vivacity of his carriage ; and about his mouth there played an expression that must have made him dangerous in sarcasm, or very charming in a more kindly humour.

He gazed for a while at the fair young gardener, and seemed to enjoy her beauty. He shook his head irresolutely. At last he plucked the barrel-cap with the green cock's-feather deeper over his forehead, and strode towards her.

The fair woman looked round, her cheek coloured slightly, and her eyes brightened. She let her hands fall by her side, and gazed silently at him as he neared her.

"Good-day, Marion !" said the man, almost roughly. "Is there any one beside yourself in the garden ?"

"No, Adam."

"It is well—I wish to speak with you. You are a good wife, Marion, and do your duty ; but yet I

must tell you that I cannot endure you any longer ! ”

The bright cheeks grew pale as death ; but she was silent and looked steadily before her.

“ No ! ” continued Adam ; “ longer I cannot bear it ! You are very lovely, Marion, and that I know now, four weeks after our wedding, better than I did when I courted you, but—you are so wearisome, Marion ! I will not say that you are absolutely without sense ; but the Holy Virgin only knows whether it is asleep, or waiting in good hope of some mighty thought, when it is to appear. I have waited long for it, and now my patience is at an end. Have you once, only once, since we have been man and wife chattered amusingly, or made one single joke ? or have my brightest strokes of wit ever found more favour from you than half a smile ? Have you not ever gone calmly on your way like a statue ? What is the use of my now and then making the discovery that you really are flesh and blood, when from morning to night I am obliged to laugh at my own jokes by myself, and so applaud my own rhymes with my own hands. Fool that I was ! I should have thought of it sooner—when I fell in love with you ! Now, I thought, she will begin to thaw ! Confess yourself—have we not wearied each other as thoroughly as any wedded pair in Christendom ? ”

The young wife remained obstinately silent, but

her eyes filled with heavy drops. Adam broke a young twig hastily from the tree, and continued—

“ I will not say that other women are, in the long-run, better, or more amusing—I do not say so ; and I have at least to thank you for showing me so early that I have made a great mistake in taking a wife. But, for the third time—I can stand it no longer ! Am I to mope and fritter away my young life in this hole, merely because I had the luck to think you pretty ? And am I never to set foot in Paris, at the king’s court, in the chambers of princes, where my talent would bring me honour and distinction ?—and never set a foot in the houses of learned doctors of the University, where there are more clever things said in one hour than you produce in a year ? and all this because you are a pretty woman—for you are one—and, by chance, my proper wife ! May the devil bake me into a pancake if I stand it ! ”

He paced up and down a few times, gesticulating vehemently, glanced sideways at his wife, and began again.

“ Are you not a standing proof that I am right ? Why don’t you cry, as any other ordinary woman would do, and fall upon my neck and beseech me to remain, and say that I am your darling Adam—your only love—your handsome Adam, though, by-the-bye, I am *not* handsome, and promise everything, whether you can perform it or not ? There you stand, and don’t know how to help yourself ! Am I to give

up my art and my young years for the pleasure of staring at you ? And supposing we should have children, and they take after you ! Do you expect that I shall be able to compose the stupidest birthday ode, with six or seven boys and girls, all as lovely as pictures, and as stupid, sitting round me and staring at me ? But we will not part in enmity ; and so I tell you, in all love and friendship, that you can no longer be my wife ! I will away to Paris as soon as I can raise money enough for the journey ; you can return to your parents, or, if you like, you can go to my old uncle, who is so fond of you ; he will take good care of you—you shall want for nothing ; and if you should have a child, I will keep it as my own—but, remain with you I *cannot*, Marion ! By my soul's salvation ! a poet I am, and a poet I will remain—and weariness is poison to the merrie art ! Now I am going to my uncle—be a good girl, and let us part friends."

He stretched out his hand towards her, but she saw it not for tears. He thought it needless on that account to wait and see whether she would behave as he had told her other women would do under the circumstances ; he turned hastily towards the door and disappeared into the house.

An hour after the wedded pair had thus parted "in friendship," the door of a stately house, in which lived the rich senator, Adam's uncle, was thrown open, and Adam stepped hastily out, in high

excitement. He hurried onwards without regarding which way he took, and now and then scraps of his internal conversation with himself burst forth, as he clenched his fist or twisted his fingers in his long round-cut hair.

“The old shark!” he growled. “And yet he had got rags of virtuous poverty to cover the nakedness of his avarice! What is it to him if I and my wife choose to agree to a friendly separation? I wish he would take her himself, if it were not a pity for her, pretty young thing! Truly, whether I moulder here or not touches not his money-bags; but, to travel and to see the world, and gain wisdom—ay! that pinches Master Money-bags sore! Pah! because he gave me the cottage, and arranged my household, am I to freeze in Arras, and blunder about with those rogues of balladmakers, and hide my light under a bushel? If I am obliged to travel like a mountebank, and train dogs and apes to get to Paris, I’ll do it! I’ll show the old gold-scratcher that Adam de la Halle is no petticoat knight, but knows how to follow his own way.”

And this same way of his own carried him this time to the Three Golden Lilies, the best tavern in the good old town of Arras. There were but few guests in the drinking-room at this hour. Adam seated himself in a corner, and did not look up until the host, bringing him wine, greeted him respectfully, “You come as if called for, Master Adam,” said

mine host of the Lilies. “There is one of my guests, see you—the man sitting yonder by the stove and looking towards you. Well, a week ago he brought a troop of players into the town, to play the great passion-piece at Easter, in the cathedral. The reverend gentlemen there sent for them ; and now it wants fourteen days to the time, and they are all loitering about idle and eating their pay before they get it ; and their director lodges with me, and drinks stoutly on the score. ‘Sir,’ I said to him just before you came in, ‘sir,’ said I, ‘if you could manage to scrape together a little money by your art in the mean time, it would do both you and me good.’—‘Ay !’ said he, ‘if we had only a decent piece, a mystery, or a miracle ; for I have left my whole bundle of plays behind at Cambria, all except the passion-piece.’—‘Eh, sir !’ said I. ‘Here with us the country is alive with gay minstrels, troubadours, and ballad-singers and there is Master Adam de la Halle, who is worth them all put together.’—‘By St. Nicholas,’ said my man, ‘I would give him half the receipts if he would write me a piece, and it succeeded’—and just at that moment you came through the door, and so he sent me to ask you.”

Adam rose up, swallowed his wine hastily, and then went straight to the leader of the strollers, who sprang from his seat respectfully, and bowed low. They conversed for a short time, and then shook hands. “So be it,” said Adam ; “within eight

days your people shall play. And the day after I shall receive my money, and now our Lady preserve you. I will go and set about your affair at once." So he went, and after his fashion, he growled something between his teeth, that sounded very much like "I'll make them remember me."

Eight days had passed away, and Marion sat in her chamber one afternoon, with eyes red with weeping, and cheeks pale with sorrow, so intently engaged turning over old letters which she had in her lap that she did not hear the door open, and one of her old playmates enter. When her friend called her by name, she sprang up startled. "Good day, Perette," she said; "what brings you here?" "or rather, what keeps *you* here?" answered the girl, saucily; "you sit and you cry, and you never think of going near the Three Lilies, where your husband's new piece is to be acted by the strange players. What a wife you are! I should be the first to go if I had a husband who could charm half the town into the courtyard of an old inn. What have you got there? Have you been studying all the old songs your Adam made on you? I should think that you ought to have them all at your fingers' ends now like your rosary." The poor wife began to weep bitterly. "Don't you know *then*," she sobbed, "and is not the whole town of Arras talking about it—that he is going to Paris, and intends to leave me behind, and is never, never coming back again?" "Bah! nonsense," cried

Perette, "what has put all that into your head?" "He said it to me himself, word for word ; and since that time he has never eaten at home, and only returns very late at night, and sleeps below in the saloon." "Well, well, he has had his hands full of his new play, and then men are always fanciful, Marion, and must always be doing something to plague us ; but, God be praised ! all are not dead that do not laugh. Dry your eyes, be a sensible woman, and come with me to the play. What will your husband think of you if you don't even wish to see a play he has written himself?"

So half comforting, half scolding, she drew the sorrowing young wife out of her room to the Three Lilies.

There all was gay enough. A number of the townspeople were seated on benches in the spacious courtyard. The windows of the low buildings at the side had been chosen as boxes by the more distinguished of the burghers. And the stage was erected in a large barn at the end of the yard, the mighty doors having been removed for that purpose. Marion and Perette arrived at the moment of the exit of Dame Avaritia, who had spoken the prologue, and assured many rich burghers of the town of her further protection. Not a place was left free for our two fair sight-seers, either in the courtyard, or at the windows. But Perette was not to be daunted, and knowing the house, she made her way through a side

building, and advanced with Marion up to the barn. Here they placed themselves behind the great linen cloths with which the stage had been fenced off, and peeped through a rent in the curtain at the play, unhindered by the actors, who, in their fantastic dresses, sought to pay their court to the two pretty women. Marion took not the slightest notice of them, and stood rooted to one spot. Perette exercised the sharpness of her little tongue on the player folk now and then, and, in common parlance, gave them quite as good, or perhaps better than they brought.

But Master Adam, little dreaming that his young wife was watching him, had, in the meantime, advanced from the other side in his own character and costume.

He began in smooth verses to bewail his sorrows. He wanted to go to Paris, and never a *sou* had he in his pockets, and his *millionaire* of an uncle had, just at this moment, been attacked by the most hopeless complaint in the world, an obstinate avarice, so that from him there was nothing to hope. To him entered a doctor, whom Adam consulted as to whether it was possible to cure avarice, for he could show him a splendid specimen of it, if he wished to try his hand. Whereupon the doctor broke forth into a learned dissertation on the different varieties of the disease, distinguishing those curable from those incurable ; and in the case which Adam described, he had but little doubt that he could be of service, if he

was only permitted to see the patient himself. Then a third personage advanced, sordidiously like Adam's venerable uncle in figure and manner and dress, that the laughter of the spectators seemed never coming to an end. To this worthy gentleman the doctor advanced with great politeness, felt his pulse, and looked gravely at his tongue, asked about this and that, and then made some more pointed inquiries about specific symptoms of the miser fever, from which he understood he suffered. Upon which the old gentleman burst into a great rage, upbraided his rascally nephew soundly for accusing him of having such a scandalous complaint, and declared the grounds upon which he refused to assist him on his journey to Paris. The principal reason was, that Adam was only just married, and had already grown tired of his wife, who nevertheless was, as all Arras knew, a perfect model of beauty and virtue.

In ever-increasing irritation had poor Marion been an unsuspected participator in all this conversation—and who could blame a virtuous wife for feeling irritated—when all at once she saw her domestic sorrows made a butt for a laughing public. She took no heed of the polished verses and comical grimaces with which the conversation of the three actors was adorned, and which so delighted the audience. With a bitter anxiety, and forgetting all else, she now listened to the answer her husband was to give to her uncle. When, however, Adam drily explained to the

audience that a pretty woman was not necessarily an amusing one, and that his Marion's mouth was better adapted for kisses than conversation, that nevertheless no one grew wiser by kissing, but, on the contrary, by witty conversation ; and that he would present any one amongst them, who had ever heard his Marion give utterance to an observation at all bordering on the witty, the sum of two golden crowns ; then the poor listener could no longer restrain herself. With one bound she was on the stage, and stood with glowing eyes and angry brow directly opposite to him who had so basely slandered her.

“Are you not ashamed, Adam ?” she cried in the midst of his harangue ; “are you not ashamed to speak thus of your own wedded wife before all the town ? Oh, if you had ever loved me, only a little, a little, that speech would never have passed your lips ! And now tell me, have I deserved it from you ? Have I ever caused you one hour’s grief ? Have I not done everything to please you ? And now will you speak ill of me before all Arras ?”

So angry and heart-grieved, amidst tears and sob-bings, scolded the poor beauty. The audience who took it all for part of the play, laughed at first, aye, and some amongst them were mischievous enough to enjoy their neighbour’s domestic discomfort. When, however, they began to see that it was the veritable Marion herself, the worst of them lost their gaiety and stared astonished at the stage. But Adam, much as he

was startled at first by this sudden apparition, quickly recovered himself, and cried loudly and undauntedly, “ My good fellow-townsmen, this does not belong to our play ; this woman fell suddenly in amongst us, and does not belong to our company at all. Let me entreat some of you to lead her away. You hear that she does not talk verse, like all the actors who have the honour of performing this most remarkable farce before your worthinesses ! Therewith, he took Marion gently by the hand, to lead her from the stage. But she shook herself free, and encouraged by the demand of some amongst the spectators, that she should be permitted to remain, and fight for her own cause, cried, “ Aye ! and I *will*, I say too ! and make you all the judges of whether I have not been badly played upon. It is true that I am naturally silent, but is it to be considered a fault, on my part, if I do what you men are always throwing in the teeth of us poor women, letting alone all useless chattering, and listening quietly to what my husband has to say ? ” “ Marion is right.” “ Long live Marion ! she shall speak again ! ” shouted the spectators, laughing, and waving her encouragement. “ And,” she continued, growing even more eloquent, “ if I have no right to be here because I do not speak verses, I know enough and of the very best too ! My husband, who slanders me now, wrote them on me himself before we were married ; and you shall hear them that you may know how double-tongued

he is, and what fair words he once had for my praise,
although he now has only complaints."

Therewith she stepped to the edge of the stage
and sang the following verses, with a voice that
threatened to desert her—

" Cheeks as red and eyes as dancing,
Arms and necks like lilies glancing,
 You may find in Arras town.
Hearts as soft and limbs as rounded,
Forms with every grace surrounded,
 You may meet with, up and down !
But with wisdom no one's blest,
Like the maiden I love best!"

A shout of laughter answered this strophe ; some
began to sing the *réfrain* and others joined them.
But a voice from the crowd asked, " But how can
you prove, fair Marion, that this lady of whom he
talks is not another than yourself ? " " Listen
again," cried Marion, " there is no doubt about it."
Then she sang—

" Others may more sweetly sing,
Lighter through the dancers swing,
 Never a straw I care !
Prattle half an hour free,
Marion's rosy lips to me,
 That's a pleasure rare !
Prettier, wittier ne'er was known,
Than my Marion, darling one !"

This time the whole audience sang the *réfrain* with

her, and then resounded loud cheerings for the songstress, who stood with the tears still in her eyes, frightened at her own boldness, but lovelier than ever on the stage. Adam sprang from the back of the scene and cried, “Silence, good burghers all ! I too have a word to say.” All were silent, and curious to know how he would manage to bring himself into grace again. He said, “There is not one amongst you who cannot perceive that my dear wife here has blamed me terribly, and managed to get all the laughter on her side ; for that, I thank her from the very bottom of my soul : I tell you all truly that my heart quivered with joy at each word she spoke, and when, at last, she hit upon the charming idea of making my own words witness against me, I said quietly to myself, Master Adam, you are a rogue if you desert such a model of a wife, though it rained honours and doublets in Paris ! and so I come penitently hoping that my dear fellow-townsmen will intercede for me with my wife, that she may take her insolent, reckless husband back to her heart and love, and forget what his slanderous tongue has said of her.”

As he said this with an emotion, which no one had ever seen him under before, there was a deep silence in the court—Marion smiled at him with an assuring kindness—fell upon his neck, and said, “ You dear, mischievous man.” Then broke from all the windows and benches a universal shout of congratulation. But Adam, freeing himself from

the arms of his wife, grasped her hand firmly, and cried, “ I owe you the third song,” it runs thus—

“ Let those who will to Paris wander,
And time and gold for learning squander,
For me I mean at home to rest !
All the knowledge that’s worth knowing
Lies, fresh springing, ever blowing,
In a gentle woman’s breast.
Wiser woman ne’er was known
Than the one—I call mine own !”

We need hardly say how gaily all joined in the *réfrain* this time. Just, however, as they were all in full song, there arose a noise of contention before the house ; certain people had kindly let Adam’s uncle know that his nephew had introduced his honourable presentment on the stage, and the old gentlemen came, with a company of archers, firmly determined to make his irreverent nephew pay dearly for his indiscretion. The people were now busied in the house explaining to him the favourable turn things had taken, and when he heard of Adam’s recantation and the renunciation of the Paris idea, he permitted himself to be pacified, became gracious and forgave the saucy poet, who approached humbly with Marion on his arm ; and in order to strike a joyous blow against the accusation of avarice, he gave a grand banquet that very evening at the Three Lilies, where Marion was obliged to dance with all the great people of the town.

The play was quite spoilt for the good burghers of Arras ; but we have, however, so much faith in their good heartedness, as to believe that the miracle, as performed by Marion, pleased them more than if, as was originally intended, the angel Gabriel and half a dozen of his body guard, had descended from heaven and kicked Dame Avaritia out of the country with due honour. It is possible that there might have been never a miser the less in Arras for it, and now, at least, there was one happy pair the more.



LA RABBIATA.

CHAPTER I.

THE sun had not yet risen. Over Vesuvius lay a broad grey sweep of mist, which spread itself out towards Naples, and overshadowed the little towns along the coast. The sea was tranquil, but on the Marina, which is situate in a narrow inlet under the high Torrentine cliffs; fishermen and their wives were already busied, dragging in with stout ropes the net boats, which had been fishing at sea during the night. Others cleaned up their boats, shook out the sails, and brought oars and spars out of the great railed vaults, cut deep in the rock, in which they kept their tackle at night. No one was idle. For even the old people, who were no longer able to go to sea, ranged themselves amongst the long rows of those who drew the nets, and here and there there stood an old woman with her distaff on one of the flat roofs, or took care of the children, whilst her daughter helped her husband at his work.

"Look there, Rachella! there is our padre, Eurato," said an old woman, to a little thing of ten years old,

who swung its little spindle by her side ; " He has just stepped into the boat. Antonino is going to take him over to Capri. Maria Santissima ! how sleepy the holy man looks still ! " and therewith she waved her hand towards a kindly looking little priest, who had seated himself cautiously in a boat below her, having first carefully raised his black coat and spread it over the seat. The people on the shore paused in their work to see their padre start, who nodded and greeted them kindly right and left.

" Why must he go to Capri, grandmother ? " asked the child. " Have the people over there got no priest of their own that they are obliged to borrow ours ? "

" Do not be so silly," answered the old woman. " They have plenty of priests, and beautiful churches, and a hermit too—which we have not. But there is a noble signora there, who stopped once a long time here at Lorento, and was so ill that the padre was often obliged to carry her the Hoste, when she did not think that she should live through the night. Well, the Holy Virgin helped her, and she got strong and well again, and was able to bathe every day in the sea. When she went from here to go over to Capri, she left a pretty heap of ducats behind for the Church and the poor people, and said that she would not go until our padre promised to visit her over there, that she might confess to him, for it is wonderful how fond she is of him ; and we

may bless ourselves that we have a padre who has gifts like an archbishop, and who is asked after by all the great people. The Madonna be with him." And therewith she nodded down towards the boat which was just putting off.

"Shall we have fine weather, my son?" asked the little priest, looking thoughtfully towards Naples.

"The sun is not up yet," answered the young man; "It will soon scatter that bit of fog when it rises."

"So, let us start at once, and avoid the heat." Antonino was in the act of grasping the long oar, in order to push off the boat, when he suddenly checked himself, and looked up towards the steep path which led from the little town of Lorento, down towards the Marina.

A slender girlish form was visible above, tripping hastily over the rough stones, and waving a handkerchief. She carried a small bundle under her arm, and was poorly enough dressed; yet she had an almost noble, though rather wild way of throwing her head back on her shoulders, and the black tresses which she wore twined round her forehead decked her like a coronet.

"What are we waiting for?" asked the little priest.

"There is some one coming down who wants to go to Capri. If you will permit it, padre, we shall

not go the slower, for it is only a young girl, hardly eighteen."

Just as he spoke the girl appeared round the end of the wall which bordered the winding path. "Lauretta!" cried the padre, "what can she want in Capri?"

Antonino shrugged his shoulders. The girl approached with hasty steps, looking straight before her.

"Good day! La Rabbiata!" cried some of the young sailors. They might indeed have said more if the proximity of their padre had not kept them a little in order, for the short defiant manner with which the girl received their greetings seemed to irritate them vastly.

"Good day, Lauretta!" cried the padre, "how goes it with you? Do you want to go over to Capri with us?"

"If you will permit me, padre."

"You must ask Antonino there. He is the patron of the boat. Every one is master of his own, and God of us all."

"Here is a half Carolus," said Lauretta, without looking at the young boatman, "can I go over for it?"

"You may want it more than I;" murmured Antonino, and moved some baskets filled with oranges on one side to make room. He was going to sell them at Capri, for the rocky islet does not produce enough for its numerous visitors.

"I will not go with you for nothing," said the girl ; and the dark eyebrows drew together.

"Come, my child," said the padre, "he is an honest young fellow, and does not want to get rich from your poverty ; there—step in," and he reached her his hand, "and seat yourself near me. See there ! He has spread his jacket for you that you may sit the softer. He was not half so thoughtful of me. But young blood ! young blood ! It is always so ! They will take more care of one little girl, then of ten holy fathers."

"Well, well ! you need not make any excuses, 'Tonino ; it is God's law that like should cling to like."

In the mean time, Lauretta had slipped into the boat, and seated herself, first pushing the jacket on one side without saying a word. The young fisherman let it be, and muttered something between his teeth. Then he pushed stoutly against the beach, and the little bark flew lightly out into the bay.

"What have you got in your bundle ?" asked the padre, as they swept over the sea, just beginning to be freckled with the first sunbeams."

"Thread, silk, and a little loaf, padre, I am going to sell the silk to a woman in Capri, who makes ribbons, and the thread to another."

"Did you spin it yourself ?"

"Yes, padre."

"If I remember rightly, you have learned to weave ribbons too?"

"Yes, padre, but my mother is so much worse, that I cannot leave her for long at a time; and we are too poor to buy a loom."

"Much worse! Dear, dear, when I saw her at Easter, she was sitting up."

"The spring is always the worst time for her. Since we had the great storm and the earthquake, she has been obliged to keep her bed from pain."

"Don't weary of prayers and supplications to the Holy Virgin, my child,—she alone can help her. And be good and industrious, that your prayers may be heard."

After a pause. "As you came across the beach, they called after you, 'Good day, La Rabbiata.' Why do they call you so? It is not a pretty name for a Christian girl, who ought to be humble and gentle."

The girl's brown face glowed, and her eyes sparkled.

"They laugh at me, because I will not dance and sing and gossip, like the others. They might let me go my own way. I do them no harm."

"But you might be friendly with every one. Others, who lead easier lives may dance and sing; but kindly words may be given even by a sorrowful heart."

She looked steadily down, and drew the black

eyebrows still closer together, as if she wished to shroud the dark eyes entirely under them. For a while they voyaged on in silence. The sun now stood glorious over the mountains. The peak of Vesuvius ranged high over the bank of mist which still wrapped its flanks, and the houses on the plains of Lorento gleamed whitely from amongst the green orange gardens.

"Have you never heard any thing more of that painter, Lauretta," asked the padre, "that Neapolitan, who wanted to marry you?"

She shook her head.

"He wanted to paint your picture—why did you drive him away?"

"Why did he want it? There are plenty prettier than I. And then, who knows what he might have done with it? He might have bewitched me with it, and endangered my soul, or even have killed me, my mother says."

"Don't believe such wicked things," said the padre, gravely, "Are you not always in the hand of God, without whose permission not a hair can fall from your head? And do you think that a man with a poor picture like that can be stronger than the Lord God? You might have seen that he wished you well. Would he have wanted you to marry him if he had not?"

She was silent.

"Then why did you send him away? They said

that he was an honest man and well to do, and could have kept you and your mother in comfort. Much more so than you can do now with your poor spinning and silk-weaving."

"We are poor people," she said, impetuously. "And my mother has been ill a long time. We should only have been a burden to him; and I am not fit to be a signora. When his friends came to see him, he would have been ashamed of me."

"What nonsense! I tell you that he was a good man, and, moreover, he was willing to settle in Lorento. Another like him will not come again in a hurry; he seemed sent straight from heaven to assist you."

"I will never have a husband, never!" she said almost fiercely, and as if to herself.

"Have you taken a vow, or do you intend to enter a cloister?"

She shook her head.

"The people are right in accusing you of obstinacy, even if the name be not a pretty one. Do you forget that you are not alone in the world, and that this resolution of yours makes your sick mother's life and illness still more bitter? What possible grounds can you have for casting aside each honest hand which stretches itself out to assist you and her? Answer me, Lauretta?"

"I have, indeed, good grounds," she said, low and hesitatingly, "but I cannot tell them."

"Not tell them? not even to me? not even to your old father confessor, whom you used to trust, and who you know means so well towards you? Will you?"

She nodded.

"So, lighten your heart, my child. If you are *in* the right, I will be the first to *do* you right; but you are young, and know but little of the world, and you might repent by-and-by at having ruined your happiness for life for the sake of a childish fancy."

She cast a shy, rapid glance towards the young man, who sat rowing steadily behind them in the boat, with his woollen cap plucked deeply over his brows, gazing sideways at the sea, and seemingly lost in his own reflections. The padre observed her glance, and bent his head nearer to her.

"You did not know my father," she whispered, and her eyes gleamed darkly.

"Your father! he died, if I remember rightly, when you were hardly ten years old. What can your father, whose soul may be in Paradise, have to do with your caprice?"

"You did not know him, padre: you did not know that he was the cause of all my mother's illness."

"How so?"

"Because he ill-treated her, and beat her, and trampled her under his feet! I remember the night well when he used to come home in a rage! She never said an angry word to him—did all that he

wished ; but he beat her till I thought my heart would have broken, and used to draw the coverlid over my head, and pretend to be asleep, but cried all the night through. And when he saw her lying on the floor, he changed suddenly, and raised her up, and kissed her, till she cried that he was suffocating her. My mother forbade me ever to say a word about it. But it had such an effect upon her, that she has never been well all these long years since he has been dead ; and if she should die soon, which the Madonna forbid, I know well who killed her."

The little priest shook his head, and seemed undecided as to what extent he should justify his penitent. At last he said,

" Forgive him, as your mother has forgiven him. Do not fasten your thoughts on that sad picture, Lauretta. Better times will come for you, and you will forget all this."

" Never shall I forget it," she cried, shuddering ; " and I tell you, padre, that I will remain a maiden, and be subject to no one who may ill-treat me one moment and caress me the next. If any one tries to strike me or to kiss me now; I know how to defend myself ; but my mother could not defend herself, or ward off the blows or the kisses, because she loved him ; and I will love no one so much as to give him the power of making me ill and miserable."

" Now, are you not a child, talking as a child, and knowing nothing of what happens in the world ? Are

all men like your father, giving way to every fancy and ill-humour, and beating their wives ? Have you not seen kind-hearted men enough who live in peace and unity with their wives ?”

“ No one knew either how my father treated my mother, for she would have died a thousand times rather than have said any thing, or complained of him, and all because she loved him. If that is what love does, closing one’s lips when one should cry for help, and disarming one against worse than one’s worst enemy could do, never shall my heart entrust itself to a man’s keeping.”

“ I tell you that you are a child, and do not know what you are talking about. Much this heart of yours will ask you whether it is to love or not when its time is come ! All those fine fancies you have got into that little head won’t help you much *then* ! And that painter, did you also inform him that you expected him to ill-treat you ?”

“ His eyes looked sometimes as my father’s used to do when he caressed my mother, and wanted to take her in his arms and make friends with her—I know those eyes ! A man can give that look, too, who can think of beating his poor wife, who has never done him ill. I shuddered when I saw those eyes again.”

Then she remained obstinately silent. The padre, too, did not speak. He ran over in his mind many pretty speeches, which he thought might suit the

girl's case ; but the neighbourhood of the young fisherman, who had become more restless towards the end of the confession, closed his mouth.

When, after a voyage of two hours, they gained the little harbour of Capri, Antonino bore the padre from the boat, over the last shallow waves, and placed him respectfully upon the shore; but Lauretta would not wait until he waded back to fetch her; she drew her clothes together, and taking her shoes in one hand and her bundle in the other, splashed hastily to the shore.

"I am going to stop some time at Capri to-day," said the padre, "so you need not wait for me; possibly I may not return home till to-morrow. And you, Lauretta, remember me to your mother; I shall see you again this week. You are going back to-night?"

"If I have an opportunity," said the girl, arranging her dress.

"You know that I must go back," said Antonino, in what he intended as a tone of indifference; "I will wait for you till the Ave Maria; if you do not come then, it will be all the same to me."

"You must be in time, Lauretta," said the little priest; "you must not leave your mother alone all night. Is it far where you are going?"

"To Anacapri."

"And I to Capri. God guard you, my child! and you, my son!"

Lauretta kissed his hand, and said a farewell, which the padre and Antonino might have divided between them. Antonino, however, did not claim his share of it ; he took off his cap to the padre, and did not look at Lauretta.

When, however, they had both turned their backs upon him, he permitted his glance to follow the padre as he strode carefully up the stony beach, but for a very short distance, and then directed it to the girl, who was mounting the hill to the right, holding his hand over his eyes to shade them from the bright sun. When she reached the place where the road begins to run between the walls, she paused for a moment, as if to take breath, and turned round. The Marina lay at her feet, above her towered the steep cliffs, and before her spread the sea in all its azure beauty. It was, indeed, a view well worth the pause.

Chance so willed it that her glance, sweeping past Antonino's boat, encountered the one which he had sent after her. They both made a movement, like persons who wish to excuse themselves—"a mere matter of accident ;" and then the girl continued her way with closely-compressed lips.

CHAPTER II.

IT was only an hour after mid-day, and Antônio had been sitting long on a bench before the little fishing osteria. Something seemed to be passing through his mind, for every five minutes he sprang up, stepped out into the sun, and examined carefully the paths which led right and left to the two island towns. "The weather looked suspicious," he told the hostess; "it was clear enough now, but he knew this colour of the sea and sky; it had looked just like this before the last great storm, when the English family were saved with such difficulty. She must remember it?"

"No."

"Well, she would remember what he had said, if it changed before night."

"Have you many visitors over there?" asked the hostess, after a pause.

"They are just beginning to come. We have had hard times till now. The bathers have not arrived yet."

"The spring was late. Have you done better here in Capri?"

"I should not have managed to get macaroni twice a week if it had depended on the boat. Now

and then a letter to take to Naples, or a gentleman who wanted a row on the sea or to fish—that was all. But you know that my uncle has got the great orange garden, and is a rich man. ‘‘Tonino,’’ he said to me, ‘‘as long as I live you shall not want, and afterwards you will be cared for.’’ So I got through the winter with God’s help.”

“Has your uncle children?”

“No; he was never married; he was long in foreign countries where he managed to scrape many a good piaster together; now he has an idea of setting up a large fishery, and is going to put me at the head of the whole affair to see that he gets his rights.”

“So you are a made man, Antonino.” The young boatman shrugged his shoulders. “Each one has his burden to bear,” he said. Then he sprang up and looked right and left at the weather, though he must have known that there was but one weather-side.

“Let me bring you another flask, your uncle can pay for it,” said the hostess.

“Only one glass more, my head is warm already.”

“It won’t get into your head, you can drink as much as you like of it. Here is my husband just coming, you must sit down and chat with him a bit.”

And truly the stately patron of the inn approached them just at that moment down the hill, with his

net on his shoulder, and his red cap set jauntily sideways on his ringletted hair. He had been into the town with fish, ordered by the great lady for our little friend the padre of Lorento. When he caught sight of the young fisherman he waved him a hearty greeting ; then seating himself near him on the bench, began to question and talk. His wife had just brought a fresh flask of pure unadulterated Capri, when the shore sand to their left crackled, and Lauretta advanced towards them from the road to Anacapri. She greeted them with a hasty nod, and stopped irresolutely.

Antonino sprang up ; " I must away," he said ; " it is a girl from Lorento who came this morning with the padre, and must go back this evening to her sick mother."

" Well, but it is a long time before night," said the host, " she will have time enough to drink a glass of wine. Here, wife, bring a clean glass."

" Thank you, I do not wish to drink," said Lauretta, remaining at some little distance.

" Pour out, wife, pour out, she wants pressing."

" Let her alone," said the young man, " she has a will of her own, when once she has made up her mind, no one can make her alter it." And therewith he took a hasty leave, and ran down to his boat, to set the sail, and stood waiting for the girl. She waved a greeting back to the hostess, and then with hesitating steps approached the boat. She

[REDACTED]

glanced on all sides, as if she hoped for the arrival of other passengers ; but the Marina was deserted ; the fishermen slept, or were away at sea with their nets and hooks. A few women and children sat in their doorways, sleeping or spinning ; and the strangers who had come across in the morning, delayed their return until the cooler evening. She was prevented from looking around her long, for before she could turn round, Antonino had taken her in his arms and carried her like a child to the boat. Then he sprang in after her, and with a few strokes from the oars, they were in the open sea.

She seated herself in the fore-part of the boat, with her back half turned towards him, so that he could only see her *en profil*. The expression of her face was even more haughty than usual ; the dark hair hung low over the broad low forehead, and around her finely cut nostrils quivered an expression of defiance ; her swelling lips were firmly compressed.

After they had sailed on in silence for some time, she felt the sun burning her face, so she took her bread out and threw the handkerchief over her hair ; then she began to eat, to dine in fact, for she had eaten nothing at Capri.

Antonino did not contemplate this long in silence. He took two oranges out of the basket which he had brought over full in the morning, and said, "Here is something to eat with your bread, Lauretta—don't think that I kept them for you, they fell out of the

basket into the boat, and I found them when I brought the empty ones back."

" You had better eat them yourself, my bread is enough for me."

" They are so refreshing in the heat, and you have had such a long walk."

" They gave me a glass of water above there, that refreshed me enough."

" As you please," he said, and let them fall back into the basket again.

Fresh silence. The sea was like a mirror, and hardly rustled round the boat's keel—even the white seamews, that had their nests amongst the rocks, pursued their prey without a cry.

" You could take the two oranges home to your mother," Antonino again began.

" We have some at home, and when they are gone, I can go and buy more."

" But take them to her with a kind word from me."

" She does not know you."

" You can tell her who I am."

" *I* do not know you."

It was not the first time that she had thus denied him. A year before, when the painter had just arrived at Lorento, it chanced one summer evening that Antonino and some other young fellows of the town were playing boicia on an open piece of ground near the High-street—then it was that the Neapolitan

tan first saw Lauretta, who, bearing a water-jar on her head, swept by without seeming to notice his presence. Struck with her beauty, he stood gazing at her, forgetting that he was just in the centre of the play-ground, and might have cleared it in two steps. A ball, thrown by no friendly hand, struck him on the ankle, and reminded him that that was not the place to lose himself in reveries. He looked round as if he expected an apology ; the young fisherman who had thrown the ball, stood silent and defiant amongst his companions, and the stranger thought it his best policy to avoid a discussion and go. But people had talked about the affair at the time, and spoke anew about it when the painter began openly to pay his court to Lauretta. "I do not know him," she had said angrily, when the painter asked her whether she refused him for the sake of this uncivil youth. And yet the story had reached her ears too ; and since that time, whenever she met Antonino, she recognized him well enough.

And now they sat in the boat like the bitterest enemies, and the heart of each beat fiercely. Antonino's usually good-tempered face was deeply flushed. He struck his oars into the water till the foam splashed over them, and his lips moved from time to time as if he spoke evil words. She pretended not to observe it, put on her most indifferent expression, bent over the side of the boat and let the water run through her fingers ; then she took off her handker-

chief and arranged her hair as if she had been alone ; only her eyebrows still drew together, and in vain she held her wet hand against her burning cheeks to cool them.

Now they reached the centre of the bay, and far or near there was not a sail to be seen—the island was far behind them, before them the coast lay bathed in sun-mist ; not even a seamew broke in upon the intense solitude. Antonino glanced around him. An idea seemed to force its way through his mind ; the flush fled quickly from his cheek, and he dropped the oars. In spite of herself, Lauretta looked around, excited, but fearless.

“ I must make an end of this,” burst from the fisherman’s lips ; “ it has lasted too long already ; I wonder that it has not sent me mad before this ! You do not know me, you say ? Have you not long enough seen how I passed you like a madman, with my heart bursting to speak to you ? You saw it, for then you put on your evil look and turned your back upon me.”

“ What had I to talk to you about ? ” she answered shortly. “ I saw long ago that you wanted to attach yourself to me ; but I do not want to be gossipped about for nothing, and less than nothing, for I will never marry you, neither you nor any one ! ”

“ Nor any one ? You will not always say that, because you sent away the painter. Bah ! you were a child then. You will get lonesome some day, and

then, mad as you are, you will take the first that comes."

"No one knows his future. Perhaps I may change my mind ; what is it to you if I do ?"

"What is it to me ?" he cried, and sprang so violently from his seat that the boat rocked again. "What is that to me ! and you can ask me that, when you know how I feel towards you ? Unhappy shall it be for him who is received better than I have been !"

"Have I engaged myself to you ? Am I to blame if you let your brain wander ? What right have you over me ?"

"Oh !" he cried, "truly is it not written down. No lawyer has signed it and sealed it. But I feel that I have as much right over you as I have to enter heaven if I die an honest man. Do you think that I will look on calmly when you go to church with another, and the girls pass by me and shrug their shoulders ? Do you think that I will be so insulted ?"

"Do what you like. I shall not trouble myself, scold as you may. I too will do as *I* please."

"You shall not say so long," he cried, and his whole frame quivered. "I am man enough not to let my life be destroyed by such fancies. Do you know that you are here in my power, and must do as *I* will ?"

She shrank together, and her eyes gleamed at him.

"Murder me if you like," she said, slowly.

"We must not do things by halves," he replied, sadly; "there is room for both of us in the sea, I cannot save you, child," and he spoke almost compassionately, dreamingly. "But we must dive below, both of us—and at once—and now," he shrieked, madly seizing her by both arms. But in an instant he drew back his right hand, the blood streamed from it—she had bitten him to the bone."

"*Must I do what you will?*" she cried, freeing herself from him with a sudden turn; "let us see whether I am in your power." And then she sprang over the gunwale of the boat and disappeared for a moment beneath the waves.

She soon rose again; her clothes clung tightly around her; the water had loosened her hair, which hung in heavy masses around her neck. She struck out boldly with her arms, and swam, without a sound, steadily from the boat towards the shore. Sudden terror seemed to have paralyzed Antonino. He stood bent forward in the boat, his eyes fixed staringly upon her, as if a miracle was being enacted before them. Then he shook himself, sprang to the oars, and rowed with all the strength he could command towards her, whilst the boarding of his boat grew ever redder from his free-streaming blood.

In a moment he was by her side, rapidly as she swam. "For the sake of the ever blessed Virgin," he cried, "come into the boat! I have been a mad-

man, God knows what took away my reason. It struck into my brain like lightning from heaven, and burnt in me, till I knew not what I did or said. I do not ask you to forgive me, only save your life, and come into the boat again."

She swam on as if she heard not.

" You can never reach the land, it is still two miglia off. Think of your mother : if anything happened to you, she would die of grief ! "

She measured with a glance the distance from the shore. Then, without saying a word, she swam to the boat, and seized the gunwale. He moved across to help her ; his jacket, which was lying on the seat, slid off into the sea as the boat heeled over with the girl's weight. She swung herself lithely up, and regained her former seat. When he saw her safe, he seized the oars again. But she spread out her dripping garments and wrung the water from her hair. As she did it, she glanced at the flooring of the boat, and saw the blood ; then she cast a hasty look at his hand, which wielded the oar as un-wounded. " There," she said, and reached in her handkerchief. He shook his head and rowed onwards. At last she rose, stepped over to him, and bound the handkerchief tightly over the deep wound. Then, in spite of his resistance, she took one of the oars from him, and seating herself opposite to him, though without looking at him, her gaze fixed on oar reddened with his blood, helped on the boat

with vigorous strokes. They were both pale and silent. As they neared the land they met the fishermen who were moving to sea to cast their nets for the night. They greeted Antonino, and laughed at Lauretta : neither of them answered a word.

The sun was still high over Procida when they reached the marina. Lauretta shook her gown, now nearly dried, and sprang on shore. The old spinning woman who had seen them start in the morning stood again on her roof. "What is the matter with your hand, 'Tonino ?'" she called down to him. "Jesus ! the boat is swimming in blood !"

"'Tis nothing, Commare," answered the young man ; "I tore it on a nail that stuck out too far. It will be well by to-morrow. The blood is only near the hand, and that makes it look worse than it is."

"I will come and put some herbs upon it, Comparello. Wait, I will be down with you directly."

"Don't trouble yourself, Commare ; it is all over now and to-morrow it will be gone and forgotten. I have a good skin that soon grows over a wound."

"Addio !" said Lauretta, turning towards the path that led up from the beach.

"Good night," called the fisherman after her, without looking towards her. Then he took his tackle out of the boat, and his baskets, and strcdé up the narrow stone steps to his hut,

CHAPTER III.

THERE was no one but himself in the two rooms, through which he now paced to and fro. Through the unglazed windows, only closed by wooden shutters, the wind blew in still more refreshingly than on the calm sea, and the solitude pleased him. He paused before the little picture of the Virgin, and gazed thoughtfully at the silver paper star-glory pasted around it. Yet he thought not of prayer. For what should he pray now, when he had nothing more to hope for !

And to-day the sun seemed to stand still.

He longed for night, for he was weary, and the loss of blood had affected him more than he would confess. He felt a violent pain in his hand, seated himself on a stool, and loosened the bandage. The repressed blood sprang forwards again, and his hand was much swollen around the wound. He washed it carefully, and held it long in the cold water. When he withdrew it he could plainly see the marks of Lauretta's teeth. "She was right," he said to himself; "I was a brute and deserved no better. I will send her back her handkerchief to-morrow morning by Giuseppe, for me shall she never see again." He washed the handkerchief carefully, and spread it out in the sun, after he had bound up his maimed limb

again as well as he could with his left hand and his teeth. Then he threw himself upon his bed and closed his eyes.

The bright moon and the pain of his hand awoke him out of a half sleep. He sprang up to calm the throbbing beat of the blood in cold water, when he heard a rustling at his door. "Who is there?" he said, and opened it. Lauretta stood before him.

Without saying much she entered. She threw aside the handkerchief she had worn over her head, and placed a basket on the table. Then she drew a deep sigh.

"You are come for your handkerchief," he said; "you might have spared yourself the trouble, for to-morrow morning I should have asked Giuseppe to take it to you."

"It is not for the handkerchief," she answered, hastily; "I have been on the mountain gathering herbs that are good for wounds—there!" and she raised the cover of her basket.

"Too much trouble," he said, without any harshness—"too much trouble. It is better already—much better; and even if it were worse, I have deserved it. What do you do here so late? If any one were to see you—you know how they talk, though they know not what they say?"

"I do not trouble myself about them," she answered vehemently; "but your hand I *must* see, and put herbs upon it, for you can never do it with your left."

"I assure you that there is no necessity for such trouble!"

"Then let me see it, that I may believe it."

She seized his hand before he could prevent her, and untied the bandage. When she saw the angry swelling, she shrank together, and screamed "Jesus, Maria!"

"It is a little swollen," he said; "a day and a night will put it all right again."

She shook her head. "You will not be at sea again for a week!"

"The day after to-morrow, I hope—what does it matter?"

In the mean time she had found a basin, and washed the wound afresh, which he suffered her to do like a child; then she laid the healing leaves of the herbs upon it, which soon assuaged the burning pain, and bound up the hand with strips of linen which she had brought with her.

When she had finished, he said, "I thank you—and listen—if you will do me one kindness more—forgive me for letting such madness get possession of me to-day, and forget all that I have said and done. I do not know myself how it all happened. *You* never gave me any cause for it—never, never! And you shall never more hear anything from me that can annoy you."

"It is *I* who have to pray for *your* pardon," she said, interrupting him; "I should have told you all,

differently and better, and not have irritated you by my rude manner ; and now, even this wound——”

“ It was necessary, and high time that I was brought to my senses ! and, as I said, it is of no consequence—do not talk of forgiveness. You have done me good, and I thank you for it. And now go to rest, and there—there is your handkerchief—you can take it with you now.”

He offered it to her, but she stood still and seemed to struggle with herself ; at last, she said, “ You have lost your jacket on my account, and I know that you had the money for the oranges in your pockets. It struck me just now—I cannot replace it at once, for I have not sufficient, and if I had it would belong to my mother ; but here I have the silver cross that the painter laid on the table the last time he was with us ; I have never seen it since, and do not care to keep it longer in my box. If you sell it—it is well worth a couple of piastres, my mother said—it would help to repair your loss, and what may be wanting I will try to gain by spinning at night, when my mother is asleep.”

“ I shall not take it ! ” he said, shortly, pushing back the glittering cross she had taken from her pocket.

“ You *must* take it,” she cried ; “ who knows how long you may be laid up with your hand ? There it lies, and I will never set my eyes on it again ! ”



"Then throw it into the sea!"

"It is no present that I make you—it is only what you have a right to, and what I owe you."

"A right to! I have no right to anything from you! If you should happen to meet me in future, do me one kindness—do not look at me, that I may not think that you are putting me in mind of how I have offended you. And now—good night!—and let it be the last."

He laid her handkerchief in the basket, placed the cross on the top of it, and closed the lid. When he looked up and saw her face, he started. Large, heavy tears rolled over her cheeks—she let them run their course unheeded.

"Maria Santissima!" he cried. "Are you ill? You tremble from head to foot!"

"It is nothing," she said—"I will go home:" and turned towards the door. Then a burst of weeping overcame her; she pressed her forehead against the doorpost, and sobbed loud and vehemently. Before he could reach her, she turned suddenly round and cast herself upon his neck. "I cannot, cannot bear it," she cried, and clung to him like a dying man to life. "I cannot bear to hear you saying kind words to me, and telling me to leave you, with all the fault on my conscience! Beat me—trample me under your feet—curse me—or, if it be true that you love me *still*, after all the ill that I have done you,

then take me and keep me, and make of me what you will, but send me not thus away from you——” Fresh vehement sobs interrupted her.

He held her awhile in his arms, stricken dumb. “If I love you still !” he cried. “Holy Madonna ! do you think that all my heart’s blood has run out of that little wound ? Do you not feel it beating in my breast, as if it would spring out, and to you ? If you only say it to try me—or from pity to me—there, go, and I will even forget this too ! You shall not think that you are indebted to me because you know what I suffer for you.”

“No !” she said, firmly, raising her forehead from his shoulder, and gazing passionately in his face with her wet eyes—“I love you ; and if I only say it *now*, I have long feared and fought against it—and now will I change, for I can no longer bear to look at you when you pass me in the street : and now I will kiss you too,” she said, “that you may say if you doubt again, ‘She has kissed me !’ and, Lauretta kisses no one but the man she takes as her husband.”

She kissed him thrice, and then freed herself from his arms, and said, “Good night, darling ! Now sleep, and heal your hand ; and do not come with me, for I fear no one now—but thee !”

Therewith she glided through the doorway, and disappeared in the shadow of the wall ; but he looked long through the window, and over the sea, over which all the stars seemed trembling.

The next time the little Padre Curato emerged from the confessional, by which Lauretta had been a long time kneeling, he laughed quietly to himself. "Who would have thought it," he murmured, "that God would so soon have taken pity on this strange heart? And I was blaming myself for not having attacked the demon of obstinacy more fiercely! But our eyes are too short-sighted for the ways of Heaven! And now, may God bless them both, and let me live till Lauretta's eldest boy can go to sea in his father's place."

Ay! ay! ay! La Rabbiata!



“BY THE BANKS OF THE TIBER.”

CHAPTER I.

IT was late in January. The first snow hung upon the mountains, and the sun, shrouded by mists, had only melted away a narrow band around their feet. But the waste of the campagna bloomed like spring. Only the sombre boughs of the olive trees, that here and there followed in rows the gentle undulations of the plain, or surrounded some lonely cabin, and the frosted scrubby bushes that grew about the road, still showed the effects of winter. At this time of the year the scattered herds are collected within hurdles, near the huts of the campagnuoli, which are generally placed under the shelter of some hillock, and scantily enough protected from the weather by straw piled up from the ground; whilst those amongst the herdsmen who can sing or play the bagpipe have left, to wander about Rome as pifferari, to serve the artists as models, or to support their poor frozen existences by some similar industry.

The dogs are now the herds of the campagna, and sweep through the deserted waste in packs, maddened by hunger, and no longer restrained by

the herdsmen, on whose poverty they are only a burden.

Towards evening, when the wind began to blow more strongly, a man emerged from the Porta Pia, and wandered along the carriage-road which runs between the country houses. His cloak hung carelessly from his sturdy shoulders, and his broad grey hat was pushed back from his forehead. He gazed towards the mountains till the road became more enclosed, and only permitted him a narrowed glance of the distance between the garden walls.

The confinement seemed to oppress him. He lost himself again dejectedly in the thoughts to escape which he had sought the free air. A stately cardinal tripped by with his suite without his observing or greeting him. The carriage following its master first reminded him of his omission. From Tivoli rolled carriages and light vehicles, full of strangers, who had taken a fancy to see the mountains and cascades under snow. He cast not a glance at the pretty faces of the young English-women, with whose blue veils the tramontane played. Hastily he turned from the road, sideways to the left, along a field-path which first ran past mills and wine-shops, and then led out into the midst of the waste of the campagna.

And now he paused for a moment, breathing deeply, and enjoying the freedom of the broad wintry sky. The shrouded sun gleamed redly over all,

lighted up the ruins of the aqueduct, and tinged with rose the snow on the Sabine hills.

Behind him lay the town. Not far from him a clock began to strike, but lightly, through the opposing wind. It made him restless; as though he wished to prevent the least sound of life from reaching him, and he strode onward. He soon left the narrow path, which swept up and down the waves of the plain, swung himself over the rails which had guarded the pasturing herds during the summer, and buried himself still deeper and deeper in the solitary darkness.

A stillness reigned there as deep as that on a sleeping sea. One could almost hear the rustle of the crows' wings as they floated over the waste. No cricket chirped, no ritornella of the home-returning market-woman reached his ear from the distant road. It pleased him. He struck his staff against the hard earth, and rejoiced in the sound with which she answered him. "She does not say much," he said, in the dialect of the lower class of Romans; "but she means honestly, and cares in silence for her babbling children who trample her under their feet. Would I never needed to hear their voices again, these windy rogues; my ears are sore with their smooth phrases! As if I were nothing—as if I knew not better on what those things depend, about which they love to chatter—because I only know how to create them!"

"And yet I live on them, and must keep a good countenance when they sniff and sneer at my work. Accidenti!" He cursed on his beard—an echo answered him: he looked, startled around; no hut, no hillock was there within a circle of half a mile, and he could not believe in the neighbourhood of man. At last he stepped onward, and thought "A gust of wind mocked thee!" Then suddenly it sounded again, nearer and clearer. He stood and listened keenly. "Am I near a cabin, or a fold where the cattle are lowing? It cannot be—it sounded differently—it *sounds* differently; and now—now"—and a shudder shook his whole frame. "It is the dogs," he said slowly.

The cry came nearer and nearer, hoarse as that of wolves; no barking or yelping, but a snarling howl, which the voice of the wind swept together into one uninterrupted, terrible melody. A paralyzing power seemed to exist in it, for the traveller stood motionless, his mouth and eyes rigidly open, his face half turned towards the side from which the battle-cry of the raging brutes swelled towards him.

At last he shook himself with fierce determination. "It is too late! they have long had the scent; and in this twilight I should fall before the tenth step if I tried to fly. Well, like a dog have I lived! and now, to be destroyed by my fellows!—there is sense in it! If I had a knife I would make it easier for my guests; but this"—and he tried the strong iron

spike of his staff—"if there be but few of them, who knows whether my hunger may not survive theirs?"

He threw his cloak around him, so as to have his right arm free, and to form with its many folds a sort of protection to his left, and grasped his staff. With cold-blooded determination he examined the ground on which he stood. He found it free from grass, stony, and hard. "They may come!" he said, planting himself firmly upon his feet. He saw them now, and counted them in the gloaming. Five he counted, and then a sixth. They rave like fiends from hell—long-limbed, skeleton brutes! "Wait!" and he raised a heavy stone; "we must declare war according to custom."

Therewith he hurled the stone at the nearest, twenty paces from him. A redoubled howling answered—the pack was checked for a moment. One of them lay struggling on the ground.

"Armistice!" said the man. His lips trembled, his heart throbbed heavily against his left arm, which grasped his cloak spasmodically; but the lids over the keen eyes winked not. He saw his enemies break forth again, and their eyes glared through the darkness. They came on in couples, the largest first. A second stone rebounded from the bony chest of one of the leaders, and the ravening brute sprang, hoarsely snarling, against the dark form. A thrust, and he fell backwards on the sward, and the staff,

whirled quickly round, striking heavily on his open jaws.

A horseman galloped through the grey of the winter's night, some few hundred paces from the scene of the struggle, over the pathless campagna. He pierced through the darkness towards the spot from whence the howling reached him, at short intervals, and saw a man standing, tottering, giving way, and again standing firm, as his enemies relinquished the attack, and once more stormed on him from all sides.

The horseman shuddered ; he plunged the spurs into his horse's flanks, and flew towards them. The sound of the horse's hoofs reached the ear of the struggling man, but it seemed as if the sudden terror of hope deprived him of his last remaining strength ; his arm sank, his brain whirled, and he felt himself torn down from behind,—tottered, and fell to the ground. Through the mists of approaching unconsciousness he heard the sound of pistol-shots, and then fainted.

When he recovered, and opened his eyes, he saw the face of a young man bending over him, on whose knee his head was resting, and whose hand was rubbing his temples with fresh-plucked wet grass. The horse stood steaming near them, and at his feet lay two dogs, writhing in the agonies of death.

"Are you wounded?" he heard asked.

"I know not."

"You live in Rome?"

“Near the Tritone.”

The other helped him to rise. He could not stand. His left foot was in great pain. He was bare-headed ; his cloak in rags ; the coat and arm, torn and bloody ; his face pale and haggard. Without speaking, he permitted himself to be supported by his preserver, who rather bore than led him the few paces to the horse ; at last he gained the saddle, the other took the bridle and led him slowly towards the town.

At the first osteria outside the walls they halted. The young man called to the hostess to bring wine : when the wounded man had drunk a glassful his face became more animated, and he said :—

“ You have done me a service, sir. Possibly the time may come when I shall curse it, instead of thanking you for it. But I thank you for it now. One clings to life as to other bad habits. One knows that the air is full of fever and rottenness, and the worthless steam of mankind, and yet thinks that each breath one draws in is a good thing.”

“ You are inclined to speak ill of mankind.”

“ I never knew one who did not take me for a fool if I spoke well of them. Pardon me. You are not a Roman ? ”

“ I am a German.”

“ Bless God for it.”

They reached the gate in silence, and turned into

the Piazza Barberini. The wounded man pointed to a small house in the corner of the place, ruinous and dark. When the horse stopped before the humble door, its rider let himself slide off before the other could assist him, but then sank helplessly down. "It is worse than I thought," he said; "do me one kindness more, and help me in,—here is the key." The young man supported him, called to a boy to hold the horse, and to a loiterer to open the door. It was quite dark within, the damp cold struck unpleasantly upon them. He bore him as directed, to the left, into a large bare room.

"Where is your bed?" asked the German.

"Where you will; but I would rather lie over there by the wall. This brave old Palazzo! They are going to pull it down in the spring; I fancy that it will not have the patience to wait for them."

"And you still remain here?"

"It is the cheapest way of getting buried," said the man, drily. "I can play the host here gratis."

In the mean time, the boy had struck fire, and lighted the little brass lamp that stood in the window. The young man helped the wounded one to a coverlid spread on some straw, and covered him scantily enough with his tattered cloak. With a deep sigh the powerful frame sank down, and the eyes closed. The German gave the boy money and directions, and then went out without leave-taking, sprang up on his horse, and rode hastily away.

In about a quarter of an hour he returned, bringing with him a surgeon. Whilst the latter examined and bound up the wounds on arm and leg, which the wounded man permitted him to do without a murmur escaping him, the young German looked around the room: it was bare, and the plaster had fallen in large masses from the walls. The joists of the ceiling stood naked and blackened, the wretched window let in the cutting night air, there was but little furniture. Meanwhile the boy brought in an armful of wood, and made a fire on the hearth. As it gleamed up redly some dusty clay figures and plaster casts became visible in the corner. A large dolphin which bore a dead boy on its back, a Medusa in relief, colossal, the hair, not yet vivified into serpents, curled wildly around the sorrow-laden brow. He could not remember that he had ever seen this rendering in an antique. Casts from the arms, bust, and feet of a young girl, amongst hasty sketches in clay, stood and lay in confusion. On a table were the different kinds of apparatus used by cameo-cutters, and some sticks with half-finished works, for the most part Medusa heads, resembling the great one, but with different degrees of passion and grandeur. Uncut shells, casts of gems, and casts in glass and plaster, lay in a box near them.

"I think there is no danger," said the surgeon, at last. "Let them get some ice, and make the boy sit up and keep the bandages cool during the night.

They have treated you roughly, Señor Carlo! But what on earth induced you to wander about the campagna at this time of night, and this time of year?"

"This obstinate rascal, the chimney," answered the artist, "he refused to do his duty unless one stuffed his throat with faggots. I was out of temper with my old Palazzo, Señor Vottore, and felt inclined to give him a kick or two, to warm us both; and so I thought it better to run away before it came to blows between us."

"You are ill looked after here," said the good-natured little man, wiping his spectacles, which had become suddenly dimmed. "My wife shall send you another coverlid, and I will see you again tomorrow. Sleep will soon come, and he is the doctor who beats us all."

The young man accompanied him to the door, and spoke a few words with him in the passage.

"I only know him by name," said the doctor. "He goes his own strange misanthropical way. Prefers sitting in the wine-shop with the lowest faccini, and squanders what he earns. But there is not a man in Rome who is his equal at a cameo. He inherits it from his father, Giovanni Bianchi, who has long been dead."

"Are his wounds really not dangerous?"

"If he only spares himself and not the ice. He has limbs of iron, or he could not have made head

so long against the brutes. Five, do you say? The fool-hardy man! But that is just one of his tricks. Well, well, he will sleep now. Dispel your anxiety, Señor Theodore.”

He was already asleep, when Theodore returned to his room, although he had turned his face towards the blazing fire. Theodore studied him long. He was very handsome, though the nose was a little too thin; his hair here and there sprinkled with grey; his beard untended; from between the breathing, half-opened lips gleamed the white teeth. When Theodore raised the cloak to place fresh ice on the wounds, he perceived the great strength of his limbs.

He sent the boy away, after he had brought a fresh supply of wood and ice, and ordered him to return in the morning. He then drew a chair to the side of the hearth, and seated himself, wrapped in his cloak, to watch. It was about ten o'clock, the bright night reigned without over the deserted square, and the slender stream from the fountain plashed lightly into the Triton's shell. From a neighbouring house he heard a girl's voice, singing:—

“ Chi sa se mai
Ti soverrai di me ! ”

The *refrain* of an old sorrowful song. Then it ceased, but hummed wordless within him still.

He fancied himself again at the edge of the abyss

at Tivoli, on the footway opposite the cascades, which in wintry scantiness gushed down from their many mouths. They walked, but not arm in arm, near each other; he and that fair girl and her lively little companion, who hastened unweariedly along the narrow, toilsome path.

"We ought to have returned with your parents, Mary," she said more than once in English; "indeed, we ought to do so now. Look, child! there they are up above by the cascade, and will soon be sitting comfortably by the fire in the sibyl, and here the wind is cutting our very noses off; yours is quite red already; dear me! how cold you look, child! The wind blows so chilly across the water too. You said that it would, sir, and warned us fairly; but our pet must have her fancies. Bless me, we have seen the view in the autumn already, and in the summer too, and then rode safely and comfortably down the path that we are half stumbling, half sliding down now."

"It is not much farther, dear Miss Betsy," said the girl, laughing, "and the path will improve. Our friend offered you his arm; why did you refuse it?"

The little woman drew closer to her, and said softly, "My dear Mary, what a question to ask! you know that I have my reasons for declining to be helped down hills by unmarried young gentlemen! when one slips and holds him tight to save oneself from falling, he might take each pinch for a proof of affection; you quite shock me, child!"

Mary smiled almost imperceptibly ; then she went calmly on her way. Her dark bonnet hid all her face from the young man except the waving brown curls.

“It was intended as no mere compliment, sir,” she said, glancing unembarrassed towards him ; “when my father confessed that your absence had caused him pain : if I remember rightly, you have only called on us four times since my poor brother’s death.”

“Four times ! ” he cried ; “and have you counted them ? ”

“We must often hear the number from him. ‘Since I lost Edward,’ he says frequently, ‘I care to talk to no one who has not known him ; how can they ever learn to know *me* ? ’ Then he always refers to you, and praises you, and misses you so much.”

“I confess,” said Theodore, “that the kindness and heartiness with which your parents greeted me when we met here, surprised and affected me very much ; and I too have wanted companionship this winter more than formerly. In the one before, which was my first, I drew back from nothing which pressed itself forward and promised to be advantageous. I see now that I have only lost. The society here is in contradiction to the place. It feels it itself, and as it still desires to be something, it is obliged to overstrain itself : that is discordant and neutralizes

the productive disposition of thoughtful men like myself ; so now I live only for myself, or for some few who have fared no better than I have, and yet from my youth up I have been accustomed to find permanent happiness in pure family existence alone."

" You have been long away from your parents ? "

" I have lost them," he said gently ; " they both died in the same week ; then I went over the Alps, and God knows whether I shall ever return ! "

They passed beneath the light shadow of the olive plantation—the path was perfectly dry—over them, amongst the branches, the sun glanced from the fleeting snow, which it had thawed upon the leaves, till they had glimmered as from a soft spring shower. The little friend was in the best possible humour, and talked of her wanderings about Rome. People suspected that she was writing a book about Rome. However that might be, it was clearly proved that she had done such violence to her well-grounded opinions, as to permit it to be reported that she had explored the baths of Caracalla with an entirely unknown and youthful Italian, and had not even refused his offer of protection to her own house.

" Do you believe, Mary," she cried now, " that I could easily make up my mind never to see my dear old England again ? You know that at first we did not intend to stop here a single month. For you must know, sir, that I come of an old family, and my first ancestor fell at Hastings, winning his bit of

land for himself and his descendants. And so my little bit of England is as much mine as the big one of a great landowner ; and who likes to leave his own behind him ? And yet who knows whether I might not be induced to pass the rest of my life here, if it were not dishonourable to forget one's fatherland, even though it forgets us and the good service our forefathers have done it ? ”

“ I do not know , ” answered Theodore, laughing, “ you only do old England a service if you conquer a bit of Rome for yourself, and so tread in the footsteps of your forefathers . ”

“ You are pleased to be witty ! ” she said, and gave him a light tap with her fan. “ But even suppose that I were of an age which made your joke more appropriate, do you seriously think—supposing that there was any foundation for your innuendo, and any one *should* trouble himself about me,—do you think, I repeat, that English and Italian, or more properly Roman character, would in the long run, be able to get on together ? ”

“ You know, my dear Miss Betsy, that love works wonders, fills up valleys and pulls down mountains. As far as mere *character* goes, I am not afraid. If the sentiments agree, what may the heart not do ? I have seen more marriages rendered unhappy by difference of taste, than from difference of feeling. But what Roman would not share in your taste for everything Roman, for example ? ”

“ You are right , ” she said ; “ at the bottom, love

is a matter of taste." Then she drew her green veil over her face, and seemed to wish to be left to her own reflections.

The two young people went a little in advance, for they heard Miss Betsy beginning to talk half aloud to herself, as was often her custom, and they had no wish to overhear her dreamings. "Good creature!" said Mary, with her gentle voice; "the journey has quite unsettled her. She always used to have strange ideas, but in England they took an innocent political direction; but with her first step on the continent arose this strange fancy of inventing experiences, which has already indeed given us much anxiety on the journey, but which has perhaps as often afforded an excuse for a hearty laugh."

"This fantastic state of being must have suited her charmingly when she was younger," said Theodore; "older people generally discover that they have quite enough to do to meet adventures as they happen, and are by no means inclined to seek them. It is to be hoped that she will soon be as little in earnest with her new Roman friend, as he seems to have been with her from the beginning."

"I saw them both returning home. He was a good-looking man, with rather insolent, but still fine eyes, and much younger than she is."

"What restrained you from giving an opinion on the question which Miss Betsy proposed?" asked Theodore, after a pause.

"Which one?"

“Whether individuals of different nations are suited to each other?”

Mary was silent for a while. “The more people want from each other,” she said, at last, “and the more they wish to give each other, the closer the connection between them ought to be—at least, I think so.”

“And even, I once knew an Englishman who had married a creole, they both took life easily and gaily. He was happy at having a handsome wife, and she appeared satisfied because he could shower wealth upon her. And yet there was always something between them, something climatic, live where they would. They were never really happy with each other.”

“They were from different zones. But if they both had had northern blood —”

“It may be so; and yet I can understand it by my own feelings. I was brought up amongst the mountains, and have only accustomed myself by slow degrees to the soft Roman air. Now it is winter; without there lies the fair pure snow. When we are seated this evening with my father and mother by the fire, and the kettle sings, and I see all that belong to my life around me, I could easily be *entirely* happy. And yet I confess that it is just at that moment that the home-longing might seize me for the old country-house in England, where the old oak-trees stand before the window, and the snowy field

lies behind the garden, far less beautiful than the campagna beyond them, and the English sky shrouded with heavy mist, so unlike this clear horizon, which should cheer and refresh me. Yet it is foreign, and something foreign like this might exist between people."

They had hitherto carried on the conversation in English. He now began to talk German, which she too spoke perfectly, with the exception of a slight accent.

"Permit me," he said, "to speak to you in my own language. You made me share your feelings of home-longing when you talked of your winter quietness. You put me in mind of my old German winters, which now lie so far behind me, and can never be to me again what they were. I heard again the light sound of the raven brushing through the bare branches, and breaking the dry twigs, till a fine cloud of snow fell past the window like crystal dust. My mother lay there ill on her bed for months together. She could not, and would not, longer endure the noise and bustle of the town. Before that time the old country-house had only seen summer visitors, cheerful hunters, and gay promenaders. Then it became the winter retreat where my mother recovered from her wearying journeys to the baths."

"You were with her then?"

"For the first year or two, only for a week at a time. The last winter, however, she would not let me leave her. I sat the whole day by her, worked,

and talked now and then, or played her favourite airs, those simple old ballads which are now quite out of fashion. The little room opened into the garden by several tall windows. I can see my father now pacing up and down on the terrace before it, with his bear-skin cap and short pipe. He could not bear the close air of the room for long at a time. But he seldom left his post, and whoever had business with him must seek him there. Now and then he came in to us for a quarter of an hour at a time. I can never forget the look with which my poor mother used to greet him then. She had beautiful bright blue eyes.”

“ And she died then ? ”

“ In the spring. My father soon afterwards. He met with an accident in riding. After my mother left us he had no rest, mounted the wildest horses, and often remained away half the day, much as I used to entreat him to spare himself. I understood him. I could never free myself from a secret terror. I was in the right.”

They had arrived at the foot of the path, and stood still to wait for their companion ; Mary paused some steps from him, so that when he turned and looked round over the country, he had her full face towards him. The fair, bright features were clouded with sadness, and there was a moist gleaming under the drooping eyelids. When she raised them, he saw the blue eyes resting full and seriously on the landscape

before her. He knew this look already. He had avoided it hitherto, for he knew the power that lay in it. Now he surrendered himself wholly to it for the first time. "Mary!" he said. She moved not nor looked towards him. Then their meditative little friend rejoined them. The conversation was resumed as they mounted the ascent to Tivoli. But Mary took no part in it.

When they left Tivoli in the early twilight, gayer from the cheerful supper, and Theodore had helped the ladies into the carriage, the old man said confidentially to him, "I will not get in until I know when we are to meet you again, my dear sir. I have an affair to settle which interests me and mine deeply, and on which I wish much to consult you. It concerns our poor Edward, and I know that you will come the sooner when you learn that we reckon on your assistance."

"Come this evening," said the mother. He promised it. When they brought him his horse, he saw an anxious expression on Mary's face. He sprang into the saddle, and gently humouring the spirited animal, rode beside the carriage for some way. Then he lagged behind, rode more slowly, and let the evening slip away without observing it. The night surprised him. He gave his horse the spur, and rode across the waste with the intention of making a short cut, and thus it was that he arrived so opportunely in Bianchi's neighbourhood.

He shook himself now, threw fresh wood upon the fire, and fixed his dark eyes thoughtfully upon it.

“ What will they think,” he said to himself, “ at my strange absence ? What will *she* think ? It is too late now to send a messenger, and where, indeed, could I get one ? She will sit at home, and never dream of what this day may mean ! Or,

“ Chi sa se mai !”

Then he attended to the sick man, walked up and down, and studied the Medusa head, on which the firelight shone warmly—strangely like the tints of ebbing life when the reluctant blood struggles with the death-terror. It affected him powerfully. At last he was obliged to turn away his eyes ; and now, for the first time, observed some loose figures, some of them of corroded Pompeian bronze, and others by a newer hand, as life-like and reckless as they. Near them lay a torn and dusty copy of “ Ariosto.” He seized it, and read it eagerly. It was the only book he was able to discover.

So passed the hours. Long after midnight the sleeping man groaned heavily, and struck out his arms in his dreams. As Theodore arranged his disordered couch, and spread the coverlid over him afresh, he awoke fully, and half arose. He felt around him, as if for a weapon, and asked, in a determined voice,—

“ Who are you ?”

"A friend!—do you not recognize me?" answered Theodore.

"It is false!—I have none," shouted the wounded man, striving to raise himself upon his feet. The pain of his wounds brought back recollection. He sank down again, and collected himself thoroughly. He lay still for awhile, and then said, more quietly,

"You *are* one. Now I recollect you. What are you doing here at this hour? Why are you not gone home? Are *you* different from the other sons of men, who only do good in order to sleep more soundly? Go!—you have earned your rest. Why do you watch my dreams?"

"The doctor insists upon having your wounds kept cool during the night. I could not trust to a stranger."

"Are *you* not one?"

"No; not for a couple of pauls; but for your own sake I do this."

The other lay silent awhile. Then he said, with a strange excitement, "You would do me a kindness by going. It makes me feel ill to have a man moving about me. When it comes to thanking, I am more clumsy than an old man courting a young girl."

"Do not trouble yourself about thanks. I stay because you want me. If you could manage without me, you should not have to complain of my being in your way."

"I cannot sleep when I know that you *are* sitting and freezing there."

Theodore stirred the fire. “I hope that you feel, even over there, how warm I must be here.”

After a pause, during which the sick man had lain with closed eyes, he asked—

“ You are a Lutheran, sir ? ”—— “ Yes.”

“ I knew it,” said Bianchi to himself ; “ he wishes to rob the church of a soul—he does it all for that ! They are no better than we are.”

“ The fever makes you rave,” said Theodore emphatically ; “ say what you will.”

They were both silent for a long time. Theodore placed fresh ice upon the wounds, as before ; and Bianchi lay with his face turned towards the wall, motionless, as though he slept. Suddenly, as Theodore was again busied about him, he turned round, and raised himself half up. With the wounded arm he clutched towards Theodore’s hand, and grasped it with his burning one, and said, low and slowly—
“ You are good ! you are good ! you are a man !” His weakness overcame him ; he fell back upon the straw, and burst into a convulsive fit of weeping. As the tears ceased to flow, he slept anew.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN he awoke, the bright morning light was forcing its way through the crevices in the shutters, and making a sunny twilight around him. He saw the boy by his bedside, and the doctor, and heard

that Theodore had gone into the town early in the morning, as soon as the boy came in, without saying anything about his return.

Thus he passed half the day, restless, dreaming, listening towards the door. Two mice, which he had tamed, and for whom he had hitherto ever had a caress, even in his moments of deepest gloom and misery, now came into the middle of the room, blinked their bright little eyes at him, squeaked, and flourished about, without his casting a glance towards them. The boy, not knowing that they were permitted guests, frightened them away. Some one knocked. It was somebody who brought the artist an order for a pair of ear-rings, in red shell. Bianchi let him depart without speaking to him ; nor did he say a word to a sculptor of his acquaintance, who had heard of the terrible adventure of the previous night, and was good-hearted enough to visit the solitary being.

Meanwhile, Theodore, already early in the day, had mounted the stone steps of the large house in which Mary's parents resided. The old servant opened the door. "They waited long for you last night," he said. "I was sent to your lodgings, but you had not returned. Miss Mary thought that you must have met with some accident, as you were on horseback. But, God be praised ! you are safe."

Theodore did not answer ; he heard music within—a sonata of Beethoven—suddenly it ceased ; a stool was pushed back, a gown rustled. As he

entered, Mary stood before him ; she seemed to have paused suddenly in the middle of the room on her way to the door ; she tried to speak ; her cheeks flushed. He seized her hand eagerly with both of his, and now saw that she had been weeping. "Mary!" he said, "I find that I have more to crave pardon for than I expected—you have been uneasy about me!"

She tried to smile. "I am delighted to find that there was no reason for it," she said. "Something prevented you ; it was very foolish to think the worst at once. I will go and call my parents."

He held her back entreatingly. "You have been weeping, Mary!"

"It is nothing ; I had a bad night, and the music just now agitated me."

He let her hand fall. She remained standing on the same spot, supporting herself against a chair. He took one turn up and down the room, and stood before her ; he grasped her hand again, stammered out a word, and then pressed her passionately to his breast. She rested weeping blissfully and silently in his arms.

"We will go to my parents," said Mary, when she had had a little recovered the emotion of that first embrace. "Come!"

She took him gently by the hand. He longed to remain alone with her ; it seemed to him as though she would be separated from him again when they came into the presence of others ; yet he permitted

her to lead him. They found her parents together in her mother's boudoir. As he entered he felt a longing to entreat his loved one to be silent on what had just passed between them, he felt incapable of talking calmly over it, or of meeting any one but herself in his blissful intoxication. It had already passed her lips. The mother, a stately, ceremonious woman, clasped him heartily in her arms ; formal as she usually was, she could not hear the pleasant news without saying some heartfelt words of blessing, which, kindly as they were meant, still sounded foreign and strange to Theodore's state of feeling. Her father said nothing. He pressed his future son-in-law warmly by the hand, and kissed his daughter's forehead.

Theodore described the adventures of the previous evening. Mary leant her head on his breast, and when he told of the combat, threw her arm timidly around her lover, as if to assure herself that all was past, and that she really possessed him again in safety. Her mother made a sign to her, which, slight as it was, did not escape Theodore. She removed her arm, and sat near him without touching him. He felt pained ; he felt, too, when after some hours he was obliged to leave, and kissed her again with his whole heart on the threshold, that she avoided him shily, and at first turned away her lips from his. He departed with a strange confusion of feeling—a weight upon his heart—and an obstinate deadened glow in every vein. He stood still for a

moment before the door ; the street was deserted, he pressed his feverish forehead against the cool stone pillars, and stretched forth his arms as if he would draw down a part of the heavens and press it to his breast, and then went somewhat more calmly on his way to the Tritone.

A passionate flush passed over Bianchi's haggard features, as he recognized Theodore's footsteps without. He raised himself and gazed eagerly and fully at him as he entered—taller and more manly than he had appeared to him the evening before. Theodore went to him and said, “ You have rallied, Bianchi, and the doctor is satisfied. Keep quiet, I entreat you ; you must let me walk up and down a little, my ideas are in a whirl, and my thoughts will not allow me to rest.”

He told him not from whence he came, nor that within the last few hours he had bound his fate to a woman ; but there lay a glory on him, from which Bianchi could not turn away his eyes. He had laid aside his hat, and thrown his cloak over one shoulder, his head sprang freely from the broad chest—the short curled hair was a little disordered—his forehead massive and noble ; and thus, with an absent look, and his arms folded across his cloak, he seemed almost to have forgotten the purpose of his visit. As he paced up and down, he struck his foot against the burning logs, and gazed at the fire. At last he turned, and said—

“ Tell me about yourself, Bianchi ! ”

"What would you know?"

The tone of this question, doubtful, almost distrustful, and yet submissive and compliant, struck Theodore's delicate ear. He drew a stool near the couch, seized Bianchi's hand and said—

"I wish to know nothing, except how you feel now; and if you are in no humour to talk, make a sign with your hand, which now betrays but slight remains of your fever."

He felt the pressure of the hand, which then withdrew itself hesitatingly from his.

"You will soon be so well that we shall be able to part without the necessity of meeting again. For the present you must resign yourself to my intrusiveness; for you must know that I have made up my mind not to let the carelessness of a stupid boy be the destruction of such an artist as you are."

"As *I* am!" and he laughed sadly. "Do *you* know what *I* am? Who knows it not? A day labourer am *I*, cutting shells for women, with a woman's patience, whose stout arms are ashamed of him when they encounter a piece of marble. Well, perhaps, yesterday the matter was arranged so that the poor cripples will have nothing to reproach themselves for in future!"

"You talk strangely—as if there were not room enough within a circle of two inches for a soul that can at times express itself in two words."

"For the idea, possibly, but hardly for the execution."

" You must have experienced that," said Theodore.
" But are you *obliged* to do what is so disagreeable
to you ? "

The sick man cast a quiet look around the four
bare walls, and said—

" I have got so used to the amount of luxury you
see about you ; I did, indeed, once think of begin-
ning a large work without there in the square, eating
my artichoke by the fountain at noon, and sleeping
at night at the foot of my work. But one is effemi-
nate and fears the weather, and cowardly, and afraid
of the gossiping. Besides, I cannot do without the
wine or—"

" But if you had an opportunity of working in
marble without any discomfort to yourself," inter-
rupted Theodore.

The sick man started up excitedly.

" Do you know what you are doing with your
thoughtless questions ? " he cried, and his eyes
sparkled. " Look in that corner ; there have I cast
one on the top of the other, all that used to come
to me with such questions. The dust is burying
these impudent babblers day by day, and my
eyes know already that it is an unpardonable sin
for them to wander towards them. And yet I was
fool enough to allow myself to hope again when
they said that models were to be sent in for the
monument to the last Pope. For a couple of weeks
I thought and dreamt of nothing else, and worked it
out with energy, and was myself satisfied with my

work. Fool that I was, to be deluded by such fancies. That was yesterday. I wrapped the model in a cloth, and bore it myself all the way to the Cardinal Secretary of State,—for my soul hung upon it, and I thought another might let it fall. And then I was obliged to give the rascally servants civil words and my last scudo before they would even permit me to enter. Inside it was all black and red and violet, with their reverences' stockings, and they stared at me from head to foot, because I had run out of my studio without thinking of taking off my old working-jacket. I thought, ‘Let them stare;’ took courage, and stepped with a bow and my work before his eminence. I saw at once that he was in a bad temper, and that his neighbour had already tasted some of its effects. I told him shortly why I was there, and begged to be permitted to show my sketch. The old fellow nodded, after his custom, cast a glance over the figures, which looked doubly noble amongst all those rogues, and said, ‘Not bad. But ’twont do, ’twont do; wants noblesse, my son, and more direct reference to the holy church. Take it home and beat it up. The clay is wet still.’ I stood like a man in a madhouse. Beat it up! as if my loftiest ideas were broth. Whilst I stood there, unable to utter a word, up stepped the monsignori, stuck their learned spectacles on their noses, and abused it before and behind till they did not leave a nail’s breadth without a spot of blame, just as when the old wolf half kills a sheep, and then hands it

over to her whelps to worry and whet their milk-teeth upon. If I could only have spoken and described all that had passed through my brain whilst I was at work on the model, perhaps the old man might have looked at it differently, for they say that he has a good-enough head. But just at this unlucky moment he was full of ill temper, and poured it all out over me. So at last I got tired of this chattering, this whizzing of children's painted bird-bolts, not one of which hit the matter, and every one the man, for they pricked me like needles. Another would have shaken himself laughingly, and perhaps have won the day. But I—how was I to do it? My father did not make much talk over his cameos, and when he died, Rome was neither more agitated nor stiller, and I have ever kept out of the way of your learned men; so I stole away from them this time too, and swore never to have aught to do with them again. As I passed along the Repelta I got into a rage, and threw my model into the Tiber. ‘Let it melt there,’ said I to myself; and I felt relieved, and took a fancy to go and walk about the campagna. There you found me.”

“You must not abuse the *savant*,” said Theodore, laughingly, after a pause, in order to bring the other, who had sunk into a reverie, back to the subject. “Your instinct did not deceive you when you felt an antipathy to my being near you. For I am here in Rome for the purpose of poking about old parchments, and digging out long-buried matters, about which ~~but~~ few are interested. Histories of the old Italian

towers, state papers, and judicial reports. And so we are doubly-separated individuals."

"*You may be, and do what you like,*" said Bianchi, quickly, and half aside. "You are good and handsome, and a German."

"You little know German learning. It is even more horrible than the Roman. I myself have a secret terror of it. It has a power of glaring at feeble souls, that turns them into stone, like those poor rôuges who gazed on the face of the Medusa."

"The Medusa?"

"You must know her better than I do. Have you not thrown her away there in the corner and left her, half begun and half ended, cut upon the shells on your work-table?"

"I do not know much about it. When I was quite a boy, my father gave me a part of it to work at. I loved the head, for I had but little pleasure, and the dark death in the beautiful woman's face fascinated me. Afterwards I saw the circular one in the villa Ludovisi, and never rested until I had made a copy of it as well as I could at home. It is more human and passionate there, than in the Grecian one, where it is reduced to a mere mask. I have never asked what they meant by it, and reading annoys me."

"If you like, I will read the story to you, as told by one of the old poets?"

"Do—and soon and—when do you return?" he asked, as Theodore arose.

“To-night,” said the young man ; “but not to read to you, for you are not well enough yet. I will not listen. I know what you are going say. But a sick man must not have a will of his own.”

When he returned in the evening, he found wine upon the table, and a comfortable cushioned chair placed by the hearth. Bianchi slept, and the boy whispered that he had made him buy the wine and borrow the chair from a neighbour, and that he had not been quiet or slept until he had seen all done as he wished.

CHAPTER III.

THE next evening Theodore read, from an old Italian “Ovid,” the fable of the Medusa, as he had promised. He looked from time to time over his book towards Bianchi, whose eyes were fixed upon the ceiling. Theodore’s calm voice seemed to bind him with a spell ; the tale which he read, to move his innermost soul—so the other read on. When he arose, Bianchi drew a deep breath, and cried, “ You are going !—you do not know how I have enjoyed it ! These tales were to me but mutilated old statues, the limbs scattered about, the head far from the trunk, and all weather-beaten and decayed. As you read it, all drew itself together again, and now stands entire before me. Oh ! that my arms were but sound again—my fingers tremble at the thought of kneading a piece of clay—but that is not to be—and you

go—you smile ! I can guess where you are going ! well—enjoy your youth. But now I think for the first time of the nights I have made you pass."

"They would have been more lonely than they have been here—and you cannot guess where I go, Bianchi. I am going to pay court to two old people, and only now and then the soft hand of their daughter touches my arm in secret. All my enjoyment is seeing—hoping."

"And you can confess that so quietly, and not gnash your teeth with impatience and longing ? I fear that I, too, once passed such a fruitless lovetime. Like a worm I grovelled on the ground, and cursed the eyes which had played me so bitter a trick."

"I bless them ! And when I suspect such madness in my blood, I refresh my dull soul in the free air, up and down the Forum, or roam away to the Capucines, where now the snow is resting against the stem of the palm-tree ; it must struggle through the winter, too, however warm its heart may be."

"Can you deny that it plagues and worries you more than the whole affair is worth ? It makes one idle and womanly, and that is the worst of all. If we were not fools, longing for the impossible, all were well, one as good as another, if she were pretty and kind."

"I think not. I require something more than *any one* can give me, unless I am to leave her for the sake of some other."

"Who spoke of that?"—"Both of us, I think."

"Not I," said Bianchi. "I never could dream that

you know your own advantages so little—with your face and your years."

He said no more, seemingly out of humour. "Let it be as it may," said Theodore, earnestly, "and let each one care for himself, and be glad that the other can be happy after his own fashion."

They never touched upon this subject again. Bianchi seemed to have entirely forgotten it, and Theodore did not agitate it. The old bitterness and fierceness of the sick man returned more and more as his wounds healed, and those rare touches of gentleness which he had shown to his friend disappeared for ever. He avoided giving him his hand; he never spoke of himself nor his feelings, never asked Theodore about his plans nor his past life, and hardly ever called him by his name; yet he never avoided Theodore's frequent visits, nor refused the little comforts which he brought him. Only once, when he saw some fruit in a basket, arranged beneath a layer of the earliest violets, with that delicate taste which belongs to a woman's hand alone, he placed the present coldly, and without saying a word, upon the mantelpiece. Theodore was silent; when he went he took the basket with him as he had brought it.

Still he continued to read to him—old poets, extracts from Dante and Tasso, and, at last, Machiavelli. The old deities, whose statues, scattered about Rome, had hitherto been to him merely fine carvings, semi-vivified by indistinct ideas, now became clear and living. It seemed as if he now for the first

time saw with his waking eyes the world in which he had so long wandered in dreams. And the desire to go abroad awoke in him, and he longed to visit, personally, all that his imagination had clearly, and for the first time, thoroughly grasped.

The almond-trees blossomed crimson in the gardens of Monte Pincio, when he first stood on the parapet and looked over broad Rome towards the hills. Below him lay the town, noisy and sunny; the river glimmered brightly. On St. Angelo fluttered the broad folds of the standard in the wind that breathed softly from the sea, and overhead stretched the soft, delicate blue of the Roman March sky. Bianchi supported himself upon his staff, and looked darkly from under his eyebrows, as was his wont when he struggled against the promptings of his own heart. Theodore also stood buried in thought; at last he turned his gaze from the distance, looked seriously at Bianchi, and said, " You are recovered; in a few days more you will be below there in your new studio and I think that we shall still find a little time to spend together, even though I, too, shall be obliged to keep closer to my work, and must somewhat curtail the pleasure of being with you. It so happens that I shall have a reason for visiting you much oftener than you might otherwise permit—that is, if you will consecrate the new studio by undertaking a work in which I am personally much interested. The matter is this: a family with whom I am intimate has settled here, perhaps permanently. The man, a

German, formerly lived in England, and married an Englishwoman, who brought him two children, a son and a daughter. The son, who was attacked by consumption, tried the climate of Rome as his last chance of recovery, and so the whole family emigrated with him. I loved him well, as did every one who knew him, and can hardly believe that I saw so much worth and nobleness sink into the earth—there, by the Pyramid of Cestus. That was last winter. His parents wish to erect a monument to him, with a relief which may shadow forth his character and honour his memory. I know no one to whom I would so willingly intrust this work as yourself."

" You may depend upon me, Theodore," said the sculptor ; " I will do what within me lies."

" Would you not like to know his parents, and learn from them the idea which they wish to be carried out on the monument ? "

The other was silent for a while. " No," he said, quietly : " I wish for no acquaintances, and love not tears. You loved him—that is enough: I will do it for *you*. You must not misunderstand me," he continued, after a pause. " I should be of no use there. Whoever wants me must attack me like a bear in his den. If I cannot escape, I can manage to get upon my hind legs almost politely, and growl my word with them. But even that is tiresome. I will say nothing and show nothing until the model is so far advanced that even the laity may see what it means—then they may come."

They spoke of other matters. Bianchi grew even brighter and almost joyous, whilst a shadow lay on Theodore's face. So they remained all the day together, and they both felt it like a leave-taking. For the first time the open, common-place day was around them—the rattle of carriages, and the whirl of laughing passengers. Bianchi did not take Theodore's arm. Slowly he walked near him, glancing at the women and the girls, many of whom seemed to know him, and here and there nodding to an acquaintance without stopping to speak to him. When he had passed, people stood still, whispering, pointing towards him, and following him with glances in which pity, respect, and a certain kind of fear, seemed mingled. He himself appeared not to observe it. He looked straight before him, often over the heads of the people, towards the villas without the walls, and the broad campagna, and his eyes glittered. "What are you thinking of?" asked Theodore.

"I am thinking how my mice will bear their fate when the old palace is pulled about their ears, and the bright daylight peeps into all their private holes and corners. I know that they have had a family lately. Poor fools! to love to linger under the same roof without learning anything from one! How I rejoice that I am poor, and free, and alone, and can carry all my belongings with me in a hand-cart!" He stretched out his arms, and waved them in the air, as if he poised the burden that awaited them. He looked younger and fresher than he had ever done before.

In the evening he asked Theodore to accompany him to a tavern, in which, before his accident, he had spent many a night. "You shall see what good Roman society is, and the remains of nobler races," he said. "They are a little mistrustful of foreign elements, that step in without knowing what they want, or perhaps who know only too well. They say that it is not much better in nobler houses. Let them do what they like, and drink your wine without making much fuss: they let me do as I please, even if I bring a German with me, for they rather look up to me."

He led him a few streets distant from the Sistine, to the beautiful fountain of Bernini, the Fontana di Trivi. Opposite the lofty grottoed and niched façade, in the centre of which the water-god stands above the artificial rocks, and rules the streams, which burst out from all sides into the deep basin, there stood a mean-looking old house, with a smoky lantern over the door. They entered the spacious chamber, which occupied the whole breadth of the house, and served as a drinking-room. At the further end the fire on the hearth played against the blackened wall, and to the right a flight of steps led to the upper story. No furniture was to be seen except benches and tables, on and around which a mixed, silent company was gathered. A boy bore plates of fried fish, salad, and macaroni, and disappeared from time to time through a trap-door, to rise to the surface again, bearing fresh-filled flasks.

A joyous welcome resounded from the lower end of the room as the two friends entered. "Eccolo!" cried a portly woman, who forced her way through the crowd towards the door, drying her hands on her apron. "Eccolo! welcome a thousand times, Ser Carlo!" and she gave him her hand heartily. "A mezzo of Frascati, Chico; of the new, that came in yesterday. Only think, Ser Carlo! who do you think that I was just talking about to my Domenico this very moment? I said to him, 'Domenicuccio,' said I, 'you are a bear and a brute, never to go and see how it fares with our Ser Carlo; for I, as you well know, have my hands full with the children and the guests, and you yourself to look after, you stupid animal! And it will seem a thousand years till I see him again, fine fellow that he is!' 'Lalla mia!' says he, 'to-morrow I will see about it; and,' says he, 'if you have no objection, Lalla, I think that he won't refuse a little drop of the new wine, just a barilotto!' Said I, 'Well, Cuccio, that is just the very best idea you have had all these ten years that we have been married!' And just then Girolamo came in, and said that he had seen you on the Pincio, and I said, 'Blessed be the Virgin! then it won't be long before we see him here;' and just at that moment you opened the door and stood before us! And really it has done you good—you have grown handsomer, Ser Carlo. I would not believe Girolamo, but positively the Madonna has wrought a miracle on you. I have not prayed all through my rosary for nothing!"

“ So I have to thank you, Sera Lalla, that I have not gone mad, and am quit for a little lameness? You have got the best wife in Rome, Domenico,—a saint! a real treasure of grace! Ay, here I am once more ! ” and he shook the host, a heavy-looking, insinuating sort of fellow, vehemently by the hand; “ and this gentleman that you see here is my friend, who saved me from the jaws of the dogs. But, holla ! there sits my noble Gigi over there, and eats and drinks, and can’t even give his throat time to say ‘ Good evening.’ Shame on you, Gigi ! to treat old friends, and one, moreover, who has risen, like Saint Lazarus, from the dead, in such a frosty fashion ! ”

“ He has asked after you more than all the others put together,” whispered the hostess. “ He could not take his glass for a week at a time when they began to talk about you. He was only afraid of visiting you.”

The man of whom the good woman spoke sat at one of the centre tables, propped up tightly against the wall, and continued steadily thrusting large pieces of food into his mouth. He was good-looking, his bald head covered with a little skull-cap, his black coat buttoned up to his throat, and a certain air of decency about him, which distinguished him from the others, without showing, at the same time, any particular pretension.

Bianchi stepped up to him, and greeted him across the table with a wave of the hand. “ Dear Ser Gigi,”

he said, "do not distress yourself—we understand each other." He remarked now for the first time that the worthy man's eyes were glimmering moistly, and that he only continued eating in order to prevent his joyous embarrassment being marked.

"He is a singer," whispered Bianchi to his companion; "he keeps to the churches, and sings on festal days. They wanted to give him the tonsure, because he has some education and is decent-looking, but it did not quite suit him. They are all free men, as many as sit here. Come, my friend Gigi will make room for us near himself."

Meanwhile, the boy brushed down the table with a by no means clean napkin, and placed a large open flask before them. Theodore seated himself, whilst Bianchi had to shake hands and answer questions about the room. A reeking brass lamp flared with its thin, redly-burning wicks over the table. It took Theodore some time to become accustomed to the atmosphere of tobacco-smoke and rancid oil, but he soon forgot all, at the sight of a striking couple, who sat at the table directly opposite to him. One was a young girl in the costume of Albano—the red jacket closed neatly round the just ripening bosom, above it was folded the lace collar, and large silver pins held the flat white handkerchief, which did not conceal the shape of her head, firmly on her hair. Her face was in the fresh bloom of youth, beauty, and health—three virtues which love to be kept together in such a situation. Only the expression

of the mouth had a shy softness and yieldingness about it, almost irresolute and sorrowful, and the large eyelids so entirely covered the eyes that only a narrow dark gleaming line betrayed that they slept not.

She ate from the plate before her, slowly and indifferently, and drank but little wine, whilst her brown cheeks glowed ever with the same fire.

Beside her sat an old woman in a Roman costume, blinking vivaciously about her, but silent, and busied with her wine and food, which she enjoyed greedily. They had nothing whatever in common, and yet seemed to belong to each other.

When Bianchi at last came to take his seat, and had emptied his first glass, he started back with an almost comic expression of astonishment, and cried, "Madonna Santa ! what beauty ! How did you come by such a neighbour, Ser Gigi ? A niece of yours ? or only a forgotten child, that appeared before your eyes by chance ? Blessed be her mother."

"Chè, Chè!" said the singer, seriously. "I wish you were right. Ask her yourself where she comes from. The sweet little mouth would not bestow a word upon me."

Bianchi cast a keen glance on the old woman, and growled to himself, "So, so, I fancy we understand each other." The old woman remarked it, and said, as she emptied the rest of the bottle into her glass,

"A bashful thing, gentlemen ! a poor shy orphan ;

lived with the wicked people up in the mountains when I found her, and took pity on the young creature. How easily one is lost, when one gets into wrong hands. I brought her with me to Rome, for the Virgin's sake, and keep her here as well as a poor old woman can, in all honour and virtue —poor thing. Look up, Caterina, when the gentlemen speak to you."

The girl obeyed, and let her large calm eyes rest for a moment on Bianchi, and let them sink again almost immediately. The artist half-raised himself from his seat and bent over towards her.

" You are called Caterina ? "

" Yes," she answered, in a deep but soft voice.

" How old are you ? "——" Eighteen years."

" You have left a lover behind in Albano, or perhaps more than one ? "

She shook her head.

" How you talk ! " interrupted the old woman, hastily. "'Tis a good girl, I tell you, and as innocent as the Madonna. Should I have got so fond of her else ? "

" Well, well ! If I believe it, I believe her face, and not yours, mother. Can she dance ? The gentleman here is a stranger, and I should like him to learn what a real salterello is like."

Theodore said a few words—" that it would be a great favour." The old woman beckoned to the hostess ; Caterina arose silently. Soon the nearest tables were pushed aside, to leave a small space

clear, and Lalla brought the tambourine. Whilst the old woman seated herself in a corner with it, the other guests crowded round one after the other, and the boy who had been serving them prepared himself for his part in the dance, Bianchi whispered in his friend's ear : “ Look at that form, and the delicacy of the hands and feet, and how she stands there, a perfect figure ! such as I never saw before— blameless even to the darling little ears—and as yet hardly knowing herself ! To be obliged to let Checo dance with her ! I understood it pretty well once. But now, I conjure you, let your eyes do their best. A miracle will be performed.”

Theodore needed not the prompting. He leaned against a table, and turned not his eyes from Caterina. At the first vehement notes of the tambourine the girl began the dance ; Lalla stood near the old woman and clattered the castanets. Señor Luigi, the singer, sat immovable behind his table, and began to hum an air with the first notes. Soon he sang the song and the words cheerily out. The words, which Theodore could not understand, the feverish restlessness of the monotonous instruments, and above all, the strange witchery of the dancing girl, by degrees so confused his ideas, that he felt as if he had been gazing into a new and unknown world. All that he had known, loved, possessed, retreated into a vacuous gloom, which deprived it of all colouring ; forms, thoughts, wishes, and hopes whirled through his soul to the dull notes of the

tambourine, as to a great review. He cast them all aside. It was as though a voice called within him, "They are all worthless and dead. Here alone is life and bliss."

When the dance ceased he awoke from his dream, and looked wildly around. He seized his hat. "Are you going? Already? Now?" asked Bianchi, astonished. "I see that you don't enjoy yourself amongst my friends here."

"You mistake me," answered Theodore, looking gloomily before him. "How gladly would I remain. How gladly—but I have given a promise. I must pay a visit—we shall see each other to-morrow, Bianchi."

"Oh!" murmured Bianchi. "Pity, pity! how you will amuse yourselves, you and the others! Pity, pity!"

He laughed sharply and bitterly as Theodore turned away, and yet he did not seem sorry at his going.

On getting into the open air, the young man stood long opposite the fountain, and drew into his confused soul the breath of the water, and the living rushing of its fall. The moon lighted up the head and part of the chest of the water god, below the drops only glanced out of the darkness. He descended the steps, and drank as if to wash away the intoxication of his soul, and then seated himself upon the edge of the basin. He remembered the old saying, that whoever drank of this fountain would lose his home-longing for Rome; and then he fell into painful reveries.

When the noise of the tambourine reached his ear anew from the osteria, he started up in terror, with difficulty he forced himself to pass the door, and to follow one of the neighbouring streets. When in the distance, the deadened sound again reached him, he paused for a moment and seemed to wrestle with himself ; then he went resolutely farther down into the town to Mary's house.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE was a pause in the conversation when he entered. His bride arose, advanced to meet him, and took his hand warmly. He let a keen passing glance rest for a moment on the noble face which looked up so frankly to his, and then approached her mother, who greeted him heartily, and bent forward in her easy-chair to shake his hand. Like her daughter, she was still dressed in black ; but wore her hair gathered under a grey gauze cap, whilst Mary's brown locks were kept in order by a narrow black ribbon across her brow. Her father, too, received him kindly, and introduced him to two gentlemen, strangers, who were seated at the brightly-lighted table. They were Englishmen, brothers, old friends of the house, who had arrived from England but shortly before. For their convenience, the conversation was carried on in English.

“ You are late, dear Theodore,” said the mother ;

" we wanted you whilst we were describing to our friends the last hours of poor Edward. My poor eyes did their duty but feebly then, and Mary and her father were both ill, as you know. We all felt the loss more than you did, for you hardly knew him ; and so you were the most self-possessed, and better able to realize what rests upon *our* memories only as a horrible agitated dream, even now almost incredible!"

Theodore felt a reluctance to talk. The quiet of the room, the feeling of agitation with which he entered, strange faces, and a strange tongue, all oppressed him in the highest degree. And now, at this same moment, when he had but just been face to face with an existence so full of magical bliss, he was expected to describe the death-bed of poor Edward to strangers.

They thought that it was his sorrow that prevented his answering. He had seated himself near Mary, and gazed long on her delicate, pale brow. Its unruffled, snowy stillness disturbed him. Her blue eyes, that beamed clear, and happy, and calmly, had to-day lost their power over him. He felt distinctly that it was his own incapacity which prevented his enjoying this noble face as formerly, that made him no longer wait longingly for each word from those charming lips, or feel each smile penetrate into his inmost soul. He struggled for awhile against this insensibility, which caused him bitter agony,—it was in vain !

She was conscious of the existence of some struggle

going on within him ; but the presence of the others prevented her grasping closer, by her fervent participation in its sorrows, the heart which was separating itself from her.

One of the strangers asked about the monument which was intended to be erected to Edward. Theodore roused himself, and mentioned that that very day he had entrusted the work to a friend, of whose character and circumstances he gave a slight sketch. Mary's parents knew more of him ; but the disjointed picture did not seem to satisfy the stranger.

"It were to be wished," he said, "that this man could be conscious of some trace of Edward's inner nature in his own being, so that he might be able to identify himself with the delicate form and short blessed life of our lost friend, as something beloved. He seems to be, from your description, a violent, inflexible man, to whom nothing can be more incomprehensible than our Edward's idea of living only for others, and of shaping his last sigh into a wish for the happiness of those he loved."

"He is rough and energetic," answered Theodore ; "but the beautiful affects him, and he looks upon what is noble with reverence and awe. I remarked, when I read Homer to him, how powerfully the idyllic, I might say the feminine, passages of the poem moved him."

"Possibly because they accorded more with his artistic fulness than the barren uniformity of battle and danger. And yet it is one thing to possess

a mind capable of being affected by certain common-place, natural, heathen emotions, and another to have one by which the blessings of our religion are appreciated. Edward was a Christian ; your friend at best is but a professing Roman Catholic."

"I cannot deny," interrupted the mother, "that I have thought much on this point already. Before we intrust a work like this, which we have all so much at heart, to a stranger, it were at least advisable to have a sketch made which we could discuss and decide upon."

"I know him, dearest mother," said Theodore, emphatically. "If it were his custom to throw his first ideas upon a scrap of paper, it would be easy enough to discuss the matter with him ; but he always prefers, first, to work up his subject in clay of the intended size ; and he has, besides, particularly entreated that in this case he may be permitted to labour for a time without letting any one see it. That it depends upon your approval, he knows already."

Then there ensued a pause, in which the rather excitedly-spoken words of the young man echoed disagreeably. Mary went to the piano and endeavoured to charm away the discord with music. Only with Theodore was it ineffectual. The simple ballad had no power over one in whose ear the maddening tones of the tambourine again awoke spectrally, and the echo of the marvellous song of the chorister overwhelmed the pure voice. He saw Bianchi's firm gaze fastened upon him, and heard again the words, "There

will be a miracle performed ! ” And here, where he was now, all was strange, and tame, and wonderless.

After the song, Mary seated herself again by his side. She spoke German to him ; she asked about his amusements and his employments, about Bianchi. He talked absently, and thus half-confusedly, as if to himself, he told her about the osteria and the girl’s dancing. As he glanced up from time to time, he marked a clouded tension over the delicate brows. The conversation between them died away. The father asked about English families, on which subject the guests talked eagerly. It was without interest to Theodore, and so he became again absorbed by his whirling thoughts. At last he departed. The strangers had taken up their residence with Mary’s parents. It seemed to him as though he were doubly driven unhappy from this circle which once was his own—doubly—by himself and by others.

CHAPTER V.

NOWHERE are impure inclinations, doubtful relationships, and undecided wishes more embarrassing and unbearable than in Rome. The vast *entourage*, replete with evidences of pure human vigour and firm will, is only to be endured, without envy and pain, by those who, in the narrow circle of their own actions, can feel certain of their own healthiness and rectitude of soul.

He paced for hours up and down the banks of the Tiber before Bianchi's door, gazing over to where St. Peter's rose mightily above the broad masses of the Vatican.

The strangely agitated state of his friend did not escape Bianchi's penetration. But he never attempted to discover its cause, as he avoided conversations upon personal subjects or inner experiences. This same restless manner seemed to attach closer to Theodore day by day. He was tamer and more cheerful in all his words and actions since his sickness. When he heard Theodore's knock, he threw a cloth over his clay sketch and opened hastily. He was still sparing of the smallest proofs of his affection, but his face could not conceal the fact that the presence of his friend was all in all to him. He sat by the window, and worked diligently at his cameo shells whilst they talked, or a book inspirited them both. Through Theodore's intervention he had found customers for his cameos, who paid him twice as much as the dealers had hitherto given him, yet his new dwelling was in no respect more richly furnished than his former one. Truly the sun gilded the naked walls on which the Medusa's head hung, and before the window lay the exquisite distance.

One evening, in sunny May, when all was solitary without, on the banks of the Tiber, and the flies played undisturbed over the bushes, the knocker on Bianchi's door resounded more loudly and vehemently

than usual. He arose from his work, before which he had been sitting pondering, and did not, as usual, throw the cloth over it. "He may see it to day," he said to himself, "if it really be he who thunders so immeasurably!" and therewith he opened the door.

Theodore burst in impetuously—his face was vividly flushed, and his eyes gleamed, "Bianchi," he cried, "Bianchi, I come from her! I have seen her—spoken to her! The miracle has penetrated again into my inmost soul! and you, best, unkindest one—did you not tell me that she was gone, away to her mountains, run away from the old woman, and however the story went? Or did you really hear it? for she is here—not a footstep has she stirred out of Rome these two months long. Speak, Bianchi, what say you? Bless the fate that led me to her side, which makes me feel still out of my senses for joy."

He walked up and down the room without looking round. He did not perceive that Bianchi had remained standing by the door, pale as death, following his steps with a searching glance: "Caterina!" at last broke from his lips.

"Caterina!" cried Theodore, "she herself, she herself—lovely and calm, and heaven and hell in her eyes, as on that never-to-be-forgotten evening, only without that bitter sadness about the lips, and in a Roman dress!—listen how it happened: I was sitting at home, in the heat, idling over my books, and at last felt forced to wander out. Some streets distant,

I fell in with a stream of people in their holiday clothes, hastening in one direction, and asked one of them 'Whither away ?' 'To the Monte Pincio, to see the races and the chariots,' he answered. I had no will of my own, so I allowed myself to be carried onwards, and, at last, purposeless, reached the summit with them. You saw the scaffolding which they were still working at yesterday ? To-day the seats were filled tier above tier, so that I had difficulty in finding a place, unpleasant enough, as I at first thought, for the sun was opposite to me, and glimmered in my eyes as I looked across the stage. As I was considering whether I should go, or how I should try to protect myself against it, and was standing in my place, I looked down and discovered a silk parasol, and an enchanting glance of a head and neck beneath it ; I sat down again, and bending under the parasol, asked my fair neighbour whether I might share its shelter with her. She turned round, and I felt as if a flash of lightning had passed through my heart when I saw who it was. She seemed to recognize me too, and did not answer. At this moment I discovered the old woman beside her ; she was talkative and polite, and bade Caterina share her parasol with me. Bianchi — how she did it ! Managing the parasol in her little hand, half-embarrassed, half-confidingly, and then how modestly and sensibly she answered my eager questions with that sweet low voice—it is all indescribable. I sat enchanted, blind to all around, beneath the little roof,

alone with her, and built it up in fancy into a cottage for us two, in which I could have listened to hours, days, years, passing by us as carelessly as if eternity was already my own. What eyes had I for the play ? But I watched the impression that the wild course had upon Caterina ; her joy broke forth when one chariot swept rushing round the corner before the others, or made some daring turn. How she rejoiced when one of the noble animals, steaming and snorting from its victory, was led near us ! ‘ Holy nature ! ’ I cried within myself, ‘ how unadulterated and unadorned thou laughest from those bright eyes ! How must he be drawn towards thee, body and soul, on whom those eyes but smile ! ’ It came to an end ; the people left the benches, and my neighbours arose too. When I begged to be permitted to conduct them through the crowd to their house, the girl refused, calmly, but firmly ; the old woman winked and grinned behind her back, and made signs which I could not fully understand ; but I still kept myself at some little distance behind them, and descended the hill after them down into the town. At last they entered a house. I did not dare to knock, but I stood before the door for half an hour, as if rooted to the spot, and saw the curtain move, but she did not appear ; once only the repulsive face of the old woman showed itself at the window ; she did not see me, as I was concealed in the shadow of the houses—and so, at last, I tore myself away, *and here I am, if it can be called being here, when*

the floor seems to glow under my feet, and my soul recoils at finding itself in the presence of other human beings."

He threw himself into a chair. He did not observe that Bianchi still remained standing by the door, or that he had not uttered a sound since he entered—he looked straight before him. "To-day, for the first time," he began again, "after miserable weeks of pressure and despondency, to drink in a full draught of life, to enjoy one hour which raises me above myself—who would not float so for ever with swelling sails out into the open sea?—but to crawl along the coast in a tattered boat, to turn and wind at the will of the shore, and after all to be cast away on a pebble!—miserable cowardice!"

At these words he raised his eyes, and they caught the model opposite him. The evening sun shone redly through the window, and the sharply-defined figures stood out in bold relief. A youth stood by a river's bank, by which the bow of a boat, bearing the wild form of the grisly ferryman, was waiting. One foot of the parting one was already on the gunwale, but the face and the outstretched arms, waving a farewell, were turned towards the opposite side, where a fair female figure, with a cornucopia, sat under a fruit-laden tree, with her head bowed in a noble attitude of sorrow; the genius of love leaned by her side, his torch reversed, expiring, with his eyes clinging to the youth, as if it were possible to hold him

back; but between them stood, stern and implacable, the ghastly forms of the Parcæ.

Theodore stared speechlessly at the head of the youth, whose features calmed him irresistibly. He had given Bianchi a portrait of Edward, which Mary had painted but a few days before his death. It showed the noble features in all the beauty of the approaching transfiguration; and the eyes, in particular, were movingly free and large. At the same time, now that all the mere accidental accessories had melted away, one saw the striking likeness between the brother and sister—one so great as to be almost distressing to the survivors. It struck Theodore for the first time—he saw Mary before him in her hour of sorrow or of lofty excitement, when her eyes shone more darkly from out the gentle face, and the serious lips were half-opened, as were the sighing ones of her brother. He could no longer remain seated—he stepped close up to the model, the strife ceased within him. So he remained till the evening glow departed, and the face withdrew itself from him into the quick coming darkness; then he went, without a word, towards the door, by which Bianchi had remained standing, grasped the hand of his friend, pressed it without feeling how clammy and cold it was, and departed.

Bianchi shrank as the door closed. He looked with a troubled gaze and absent thoughts around him. So he remained leaning against the wall, *incapable of moving*. His determination had long

been formed, but his limbs would not obey his will. The night arrived. At last he was able to raise himself, and stood battling with the tremor that fell upon him, his clenched hand pressed against his eyes. Then he uttered one single hollow cry, and felt that he had again attained the mastery over himself. He left the house with a steady step. None of all the numerous promenaders who were enjoying the coolness of the night remarked him, so calmly he looked around. He reached at last the part where Caterina lived, and knocked, without hesitation, at the door of a small house. It opened, and he entered the passage. He glanced up the stone staircase, down which a ray of light streamed. Above, with a lamp, stood Caterina.

The man revelled for a moment in the perfect beauty of the young girl, who, leaning over the balustrade, holding the lamp out before her, was agitated with the most charming expression of love at recognizing the well-known face below in the shade. She nodded, and smiled, and waved a greeting to him. "Come, come!" she cried, as he loitered below. He strode slowly up the steps; but when the light of the lamp fell upon his face, all her smiles and joy died away from her lips. "Carlo! you are ill," she said to him. He pressed her gently back, and shook his forefinger warningly. "Be still," he said; "come within, Caterina—come!"

She followed him in breathless anxiety. The little room was mean, but clean and neatly kept. Flowers

stood in the window ; a bird hung in its cage, and began to chirp as the lamp-light disturbed it. On the table lay a simple guitar. The old woman had been sitting near it, at her work. She arose, greeting the new arrival cringingly and confidently. "Good evening, Signor Carlo," she cried ; "how goes it ? You have just come at the right moment. The poor foolish thing there—not a song would please her, not a string was in tune ; and even the bird that you gave her, too, sang too loud for her. 'Daughter,' said I, 'he will be here directly—he who is dearer to you than your eyes, silly girl that you are.' 'Mama,' said she, 'I feel so anxious—my heart beats so—I know not why.' 'Hush, hush !' said I ; 'you are a child, to have such a gentleman, who bears you in his very hands, and watches and cares for you like his own heart'"—

—"And who will punish you, you witch !" shrieked Bianchi, striding close up to her—"you poison, you baseness ! Thank your grey hairs that you do not feel the weight of my hand !" He shook her violently by the shoulder. The old woman trembled. "Do not play such rough jokes upon a poor old woman," she stammered ; "You have frightened me so that I shall have the gout. What ! speak gently, Signor Carlo, and do not utter such unchristian words, enough to make one cross and bless oneself ! What have you to say against the poor old Neuna ?"

"What ?" foamed Bianchi, and thrust her from him so violently that she sank upon her knees,—

"you dare to ask, ? To play the virtuous to my very face, after you have betrayed me ? Away ! out of the house, and that without tarrying or whimpering—for I know you, and I ought to have known that you could be no fit guardian, and that treachery nestles in your withered breast !"

The old woman had raised herself, and waited with assumed humility a few feet from him, by the window. " You are right, Signor Carlo," she said ; " I ought not to have done it ; but I pitied the poor lonely creature, because she never got a glimpse of the world Sunday nor working day, and seeing nothing but the roofs opposite, or the dark streets and the little bits of starry sky at midnight, when you take her out now and then. , Child,' said I, ' he is so kind that he cannot be angry with you, when you tell him this evening that you have been to see the races with me.' She did not like to go, poor thing ; but I saw how much she wished it, and so persuaded her. And what harm is done? If you had not made all this noise about it, she would only have had a pleasure the more."

" Go !" said Bianchi, with inexorable calmness ; " not one word more."

The old woman glided to the girl, who was seated on a chair in the corner, with downcast eyes. " Daughter !" she whispered, " do *you* try him." Catarina cast a glance at Bianchi's face, and shook her head. " It is useless," she answered.

" Let me stop the night here at least," begged the old woman, and approached the man a step nearer.

“Where shall I rest my old head?—how can I collect my little things?”

“Go!” re-echoed the man;—“*your* things! you have nothing but what I have given you. Go, or”—

He raised his hand. The old woman trembled. Muttering a confused medley of curses, prayers, and threats, she glided from the house.

“Caterina,” said Bianchi slowly, without looking up, “it is over! After to-day you see me not again! Do not ask me why, and do not be unhappy at the idea that you have made me angry. I have only been so with that she-fiend who has just gone from us. You are good, and will be happy, even though you do not see me again. Another will come, and will knock at your door—the same who sat by your side at the races. Open to him, greet him and love him—and be true to him! You must not tell him that you know me; you must never utter my name before him. But keep still at home, as you have hitherto done; and, should you chance to go out, avoid that part of the town that lies below by the Tiber. Promise me all this, Caterina!”

He waited for an answer. Instead of it, there came a sob from the corner that cut through his very heart. “Do not weep!” he said, as calmly as he could; “You hear that I do not go from you in anger, and you will be happy. All will be better for you than it has been hitherto. You will love the other better than you have loved me!”

“Never!” groaned from the lips of the poor

girl. Her sobs prevented her saying more. But in that one sound spoke out a true vehement avowal of boundless affection. Bianchi's darkened brow brightened. He looked up joyously—turned round and approached her. Beside herself, she rushed towards him, and he received her as she pressed him unconsciously to her arms. He kissed her forehead. "Hush!" he said, "Thou and I—we must collect ourselves. It is now as well as it was, and better. But it cannot remain so. It cannot or I shall be lost. Come!" he said, "make a bundle of your best and favourite things, and what you will want for a journey. Hasten, Caterina. I think that we shall see each other again—but not here. Have patience."

She looked at him with her large eyes. She understood nothing—she anticipated nothing—mechanically she did as he directed her. "Where are we going?" she asked, timidly, when all was ready.

"Come," he said. He extinguished the light. The bird in its cage fluttered eagerly against the wires. The guitar gave out a saddened note as he struck against it in the darkness. Both their hearts beat violently—and so they went.

CHAPTER VI.

THEODORE's mind was in a strange state when he left Bianchi's house. As soon as he felt the cool

air breathe upon his face, the feeling of depression which so weighed upon him, as he stood before the model, left him at once. Even the secret remorse in the background of his thoughts almost served to intensify his mental clearness, as the shadow does the light.

The former of the two girls passed before his mind's eye, and his heart never faltered for a moment. Yet it was unjust towards the stranger—a feeling of wonder struck through it still, when it recollects all the beauties of that marvellous face. But it beat high and fiercely, when it recollects the time of his first knowing and loving, of his growing passion for Mary. And what had changed in the interim? Had she not remained the same? Truly, delicacy and a feeling of propriety had restrained her in the presence of others. But she had told him, with all the ever-increasing intensity of her whole being—with her eyes, which never moved from him as long as he was near her; with her hands, that were so loth to leave his when he went, that she had utterly and unrestrictedly abandoned her whole existence to him.

“Can I blame in her,” he said to himself, “that she sits in awe of her puritanical mother—that she did not break this old bond of reverence at the same moment that she bound herself to me?”

As if he had to confess to her all with which he had these weeks long made his life miserable, he felt constrained to see her. He knew that the English

visitors, who had annoyed him so, had left Rome the day before. He felt as if all was now to begin anew. In this state of freshly-awakened happiness he sprang up the steps of the house.

But a few moments before, Miss Betsy had been standing in Mary's chamber, about to take her leave. The girl was seated by the piano, in the shade, with her hands grasping the arms of her chair, as if afraid that she should sink down upon the floor, if she did not support herself.

"Take my advice, child," said the little woman, at the end of a long conversation. "Directly he appears, and without any beating about the bush, tell him that he will only lose time in trying to excuse himself. Do that, Mary—I advise you; he is young enough to grow a better man, if he begins in time. It is scandalous and, dear heart, much as I wish it, I cannot retract a word that I spoke in my first burst of anger. God has, however, brought other sinners to himself before now; if he only had more religion; you must confess that I have often spoken to him about it, and now you see I was right; shame upon him, child, to have no more respect for you! I looked round, fortunately none of your acquaintances were sitting near us, for respectable people do not go into this part of the circus, but into the private boxes, unless, indeed, they want to study the people. But he spoilt the whole play for me; and I cannot forgive him. Dear me! if you had been with me, you would have died upon the spot!"

Do you think that he took his eyes off her for a moment? And she seemed to know him—an old passion—and that might be some excuse for him; for he has found girls pretty enough before he knew you. But people ought to have some self-respect, at least in public, and pretend not to recognise each other. Well, well, child, when you talk to him seriously and once for all, he will shrink in his shoes; but if *you* will not do it—willingly as I would spare you—my principles require me to tell it all to your parents, that they may bring him to his senses. It would be too great a disgrace and misfortune for a family like yours to receive such a frivolous person into its circle. Have you never heard of any old Roman flirtation which he gave up on your account?"

"No," said the girl, in a low voice. How could she confess that the description of her officious tale-bearer brought a picture vividly before her mind, which had once before caused her an anxious day? The day after Theodore had told her about the dance in the osteria, she had walked arm-in-arm with him through the town. From out a lowly window looked a lovely face, which she pointed out to her friend. He had been unable to repress a sudden start, and the girl, too, seemed to recognize him. "It is the girl from Albano of last night," he said, and then turned the conversation suddenly to another subject. But the face had impressed itself feature by feature upon her memory.

"Do not be down-hearted, my child," said Miss Betsy, passing her hand over Mary's hair, "and don't fret. Human beings, and men in particular, are not angels. Dear me! who has not had to bear the like. Do you talk seriously to him, and all will come right. Good night, my child; I will come and see you to-morrow, Heaven bless you!"

She left hastily. Without she met Theodore, who nearly ran against her. "Pardon me," he said; "a bridegroom who is hastening to his bride may be excused for being in a hurry. Is it not so, dear Miss Betsy?" He did not remark the cold expression with which she greeted him. "You will find Mary —— indeed she was not expecting you." He greeted her hastily again, and rushed into the room.

For the first time he found her alone, standing at the window, in the darkness, her hair loosened about her face. In his heart he fervently blessed the good fortune that seemed so willing to pave the way for a perfect reconciliation. Gently he approached her. She did not move. He passed his arm around her waist, and called her by her name. She started and turned round, and he saw her eyes, gleaming wet with tears. "You are weeping, Mary, my own love—you are weeping," he cried, and would have pressed her closer to his heart. She resisted him without speaking. She closed her eyes and repressed her tears, and shook her head. "No!" she said, at last, "I am not weeping. It is passed! It is well!"

He took a turn up and down the room. He knew not how it happened, but in one moment all his joyousness had gone. "What is the grief," he said, at last, after a pause, "which *I* may not know? If you but knew with what a feeling of happiness I stepped over this threshold, what a gleam of joy passed through me at finding you at last alone! And now you are so distant, and more reserved than under all the restraints of society. You know not *what* amount of sorrow you heap upon both of us."

She remained silent, and kept her eyes firmly closed. She compared within herself the words he spoke, with those that had but just before so chilled her heart, his glances with those which her old friend had described, and which had been directed to another. She felt something within her which would gladly have pleaded for him, but too many voices cried against it. She had listened to Miss Betsy's tale as if it related neither to herself nor to him, like something incomprehensible, which she possessed no power of appreciating. But yet it was the last straw upon the burden, which she had borne for weeks past. Theodore deceived himself when he fancied that he alone had suffered from his miserable over-excited dreamings. That he was altered, that the first glow of love had paled, that his heart was no longer sure of itself had not escaped Mary's penetration. Whilst he was present she controlled herself for his sake, for the world she would not have let him see that she doubted him; and when she was alone

she blamed herself, and said that she had seen falsely, and seen more than existed ; that a man had thoughts sometimes that absorbed him, and followed him even into the presence of his love. And she knew too that the restraint her mother imposed annoyed him more day by day. And yet just at this moment a feeling of the deepest agony burst through all, and closed her lips and heart at the very time when words were so much wanted. She hoped for nothing from questionings, and of reproaches she would not suffer herself to think. She felt no acute pain, but as if paralyzed, so that she felt not that he was near her, and yet would have received a death-blow had he left her.

So they stood in miserable self-deception opposite each other. He had already taken his hat, intending to put an end to this unbearable situation, when her mother entered. He must remain. Lights were brought. The women seated themselves, whilst he stood, answering in monosyllables, and cursing a thousand times both himself and his miserable fate. And, as everything disagreeable invariably heaps itself together at such moments, the mother began to talk of Edward's monument. He could not conceal that he had seen it that day for the first time, and was obliged to describe the feeling and execution of the work.

He roused himself a little. "It is incomparable," he said ; "I cannot express how it affected me. Edward himself, living but at the same time, glorified

And most marvellous, revealed through some strange inspiration of art, his very attitude, that peculiar, kindly way he had of bending his head forward, a peculiarity of which I never said a word to Bianchi."

"What you tell us may be perfectly true, dearest Theodore," said the mother, after some reflection ; "I must confess, however, that the additional figures, as you describe them, are so utterly repugnant to me, that I feel that I could never pray at my son's grave whilst the stone presented to me these strange fabulous forms, which horrify instead of elevating the mind."

"They are symbols, mother, symbols of the most exquisite feelings, not foreign to your own when once you appreciate their meaning. Would you not have been affected had an Italian poet written a poem on Edward in his own language, even though it was not your own mother tongue ?"

"True ; but then it would only be the expression which would seem strange to me ; but here the idea of the representation that repels my holiest feelings, is so strong that I run away and feel that I can have nothing in common with it."

"You speak harshly ! "

"I wonder that you think it harsh, dear Theodore, when it is the natural feeling of a woman and a Christian."

"And you are in Rome, and see each day the wonders of bygone races, and enjoy the deeds of a thousand different spirits, each of which is different

from your own, and yet can close your heart and turn away here—here, where a spirit for your sake has brought up out of his inmost soul all that it possessed."

"I do not dispute his good-will. But, just because it touches me so nearly and is done for my sake, I feel more susceptible against what is wrong ; the best intentions may be ungrateful to us when they have no respect for our own feelings."

Theodore approached Mary, who had sat silent, at her work. "Mary," he said, "has Bianchi's effort offended you too ?"

"No ;" she said gently ; "but my mother is right. One cannot love what is strange to us—at least I cannot ! A man possibly."

He only partly understood her words, but he understood that she withdrew herself from him. An unspeakable feeling of agony seized him. It was not irritation—no little feeling of bitterness—which made him bow silently and leave them. He felt that he must collect himself—rouse up his crushed spirits. He would have talked wildly had he stayed.

"It shall not be," he said to himself, when he reached the street. "She is right ; we were and should have ever remained strangers to each other. I looked upon my longing to throw my whole heart upon her anew, as fruitless. No wonder that at last she became wearied of it ! But it was horrible that it should happen just on this day when I had so sweetly deceived myself, so blissfully lied to my soul,

and was more full of hoping than ever ! It was horrible, yet wholesome. Now am I cured for ever of this presumptuous amiable self-deception ! ”

Then he thought of Bianchi. “ In pity,” he said, “ I should have spared him this ; he will have something to throw into the Tiber again. No ; he shall not. I will keep this monument for myself, to warn me in future how I trust mankind.”

So he reached his dwelling ; he lighted his lamp and sat down to write. He began a letter to Mary, calm and gentle—after the first few lines, the lie became apparent—for it seethed and boiled and surged within him, till he threw the pen upon the table, and sprang up to go—he knew not whither. At last he went again into the night, towards Bianchi’s house. Should he seek him out, tell him all ? conceal all from him ? or only in his neighbourhood struggle for decision and composure ? He knew not clearly—but solitude he could not bear.

Only a young and narrow moon stood above the roofs, but the houses were bright, the windows and balconies alive with people. Along the Corso rolled a gay stream of careless promenaders, refreshing themselves in the cool evening ; laughing girlish faces, foreign and Roman, lightly dressed, as they had just escaped from the close rooms. The street was like a long corridor near a ball-room, where the company wander in cool twilight between the dances. Here and there music floated through the open windows,

and a girl's voice amongst the crowd sang lightly to the air.

Theodore was obliged to cross the stream. He seemed to himself like one departed, who has nothing more to do with life, but who is forced to revisit some friend in order to reveal to him some forgotten duty before he departs for ever. He buried himself in the small deserted streets which lead down to the Tiber, and passed along without the power of grasping any one train of thought firmly ; at last, wearied by the fruitless endeavour, he let his spirit dive along the empty waste of sorrow, as across a shoreless, waveless sea.

Thus he reached a part of the river bank called the Ripa Grande, where the boats lie which ply to Ostia and to the little post steamer and other shipping ; from there down to the Ripetta there are still some hundred paces, and no direct connection by the water. He turned, however, to the right, towards the broader street, as a loud altercation reached his ears from the summit of the landing-steps. He heard the sound of a voice through it which made him stop suddenly ; he approached the crowd, the individuals composing which he could only distinguish gradually by the light of a flaring street lamp. The dispute seemed to be about a girl that a sailor had seized by the arm and was endeavouring to drag off—another tried to separate them—“ Let her go, Pietro ; ” he cried. “ How long have you taken cargoes of women, kidnapper that you

are ? See, she is crying, poor thing ! she does not want to go back into your hole of a cabin, she has good reasons—”

“The devil take you ! ” shouted the other, dragging at the girl. “She will have reasons enough ! But the man who brought her, and paid me well too, said, ‘Ship her to Ostia and place her in safe hands there, and take care she don’t get back again.’ He had his reasons too, I fancy, and reasons that he backed with good arguments. The baggage ! She has been up to some mischief ! If she was the blessed innocent she pretends to be now, why did she not make a fuss when the man brought her ? But what do you think ? then she was as quiet as a mouse, only cried and sobbed, and kissed the man till it made him quite sad, and he promised to come and see her in Ostia ; and now, why should she take a fancy to run away—the cat ! as soon as I turned my back—and struggled and screamed half along the street when I wanted to do my duty and place her in safety again ? Tell me that if you can ! No ! away with the witch, and hold your jaw ; and *accidenti* on any one who gets in my way.”

“I *cannot*, I *will* not go back,” cried the girl’s voice : “this man is false ; he insulted me shamefully ; he breaks his agreement ; save me ! ”

“Who will believe you, you liar ! who only lie to get away, and to abuse me ? Away with your hands, I say, and back to the cabin.”

“*Halt !*” thundered a voice suddenly. The con-

tending parties turned round startled, and saw Theodore breaking through the crowd to place his hand on the girl's arm. "She is mine," he cried, "and goes with me."

There was a pause. Caterina had recognized the young man instantaneously. Wavering between joy and bitter doubt, she stood with downcast eyes.

"Do you take us for children?" cried the sailor, "to think that we are going to be made fools of by the first fellow who comes by? If you want a sweetheart, you will find plenty on the Corso for gold and good words. Who told you to thrust your oar in, and with a style as if you had the best right in the world?"

"I have," said Theodore, loudly and firmly; "I have—for she is my wife!"

"His wife!" ran through the crowd. The nearest drew back a step.

"Your wife! that you must prove—or it may be,—halt!" interrupted the sailor. "Tell us her name, sir, her name! a husband generally knows so much of his wife, even though he don't know what she is about in the streets late at night."

"Caterina," said Theodore, "do you know me?"

"Yes," answered the girl.

"Caterina!" murmured the sailor; "it is right—so the other one called her."

"You will go with me, Caterina?" said Theodore—"you will tell me the reason why you have left me, and forced me to seek you up and down the streets of

Rome in anger and fear? So! to Ostia? and he was going to meet you there? It is enough—come!"

He spoke so sternly, and with a face in which sorrow and anger were so plainly written that no one doubted him for a moment. "It is her husband," they whispered: "she was going to run off with the other. God pity him, when he falls into his hands, as she has done!"

Caterina did nothing to undeceive them. Obediently she ascended the steps by Theodore's side; and her astonishment at being saved by *him*, to escape whom she had fallen into the danger, resembled the conscious confusion of a discovered criminal. The sailor alone did not seem perfectly convinced. He looked at the piece of gold which Theodore had thrown to him, and growled, "If it was all right, the gentleman would not have put his hand in his pocket. Well, I am doubly paid, at all events: what does it matter to me?"

CHAPTER VII.

HE walked beside her through two or three streets, holding her hand in his. But neither looked at the other, nor did a word pass between them, till suddenly he released her hand, and asked, "Whither shall I take you, Caterina?"

"I know not," she answered.

"To the Via Margatta?"

"No!" and she shrank together: "the old woman would find me there—or he."

"Who?"

"I may not name him—least of all to you—he has forbidden me."

"Then it is Bianchi," said Theodore, in a hollow voice. She did not deny it.

As they passed along, the misgiving which had arisen in his breast became stronger. The strange silence of the artist, while he described to him the scene at the Circus, and his meeting with the girl, were now explained and obvious for the first time. "Had we but confided to each other what was nearest to our hearts!" he sighed of himself and his friend. He knew not all as yet.

When they reached the house where Theodore lodged, he produced a key, and opened the door. Caterina stepped back. "I do not enter with you," she said. "No! rather would I sleep on the steps of Santa Maria Maggiore, than there within"—

"Child," he said, "I am no longer now what I might have seemed but a few hours ago! Thou art as safe with me as with a brother."

She looked at him in the darkness, as keenly as she could, and it seemed as if some strange light struck her. "I know," she said, remaining still some steps from the door; "he has arranged it all with you. He came and tried to persuade me that he had sold me to you, or given me to you. I was

to love you as I had loved him. '*I cannot*,' I told him, and I swore it in my soul, and he saw clearly enough that it was true. Then he wished to entrap me, and brought me down to the boat, and ran to tell you that I was below, and that you might go and take me.—But I will never be yours—no, though you were a thousand times his friend, and though he should murder me a thousand times when I did not do his will ! Go ! I can find my way back to my mountains again, and you can tell him—what you will, and—farewell !'

She turned away. Hardly had Theodore time to arouse himself from his astonishment, and to overtake her. He seized her by the hand. "Caterina," he said, "when I swear that you shall be to me as a sister, and that I will take you back to your Carlo again as you left him—you cannot hesitate to enter my house!"

"You could do that ? you would do that ?" she asked, stopping hesitatingly. "It is impossible ; you do not know him ; no one can alter *him*!"

"Trust !" he said. The hope that spoke so sweetly to her, came to his assistance. She forced herself gently from him, and followed him into the house. As soon as she reached his chamber, still in darkness, she seated herself on a stool close by the door, her bundle, which she had carried with her, resting on her lap. He struck a light, and spoke not again, but turned over his papers mechanically, purposeless. His forehead glowed when he thought of

Bianchi's deed. The exquisite consciousness of his utter devotion, which the past hour had taught him, supported him, when the feeling that Mary was lost to him for ever would have crushed him.

Whilst he was thus dreaming about the future and nerving himself to bear his fate, he heard a light breathing from the door. He looked up and saw that Caterina had wept herself into a heavy sleep. Gently he stepped to her side—her head had sunk upon her shoulder, her arms hung down, her breast heaved with sorrow-laden dreams. He raised her gently and cautiously, and bore her in his arms to a sofa which stood near the wall. As he laid her down his face approached her cheek, he felt the warm breath from her lips, the scent from her hair swept around him, the beauty of her limbs rested blooming before him ; but all ill passion had gone from him—he raised himself, spread out his cloak over the sleeping girl, and went to his room. Not until the lesser stars were dwindling into darkness did he snatch a short and restless sleep ; but no thought of Caterina disturbed it.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN the bright morning he entered Bianchi's workshop. He started as the haggard, pallid face of his friend looked up to him from the work-table. His hair seemed to have grown suddenly greyer, his eyes

darker ; and yet a kindly expression played about the compressed lips when he recognised Theodore.

" You have passed a bad night," said Theodore, " and I am the cause of it."

" I lay awake," said Bianchi, calmly ; " but why do you trouble yourself about the fancies that now and then drive my rest from me ? Let us talk about better things—talk, read, and, above all, stay if you can. Let it be so—it gives me a strange pleasure to-day to hear your voice."

" Bianchi, it is useless to hide yourself under a cloak of words when your whole heart lies open before me—I know all !"

" You know all !—then keep secret what you know," said Bianchi, vehemently ; " keep it secret—never speak a word to me about it. It lies behind me, far behind me ! Ay !" he continued, " think of it as you will, only let all be as it was—promise me that."

Theodore stood deeply pained ; he remembered that he, too, in a few days would look upon all here as if it lay far, far behind him ; but he could not confess that to him, for fear of being unable to perform what he had now to do.

" I must speak, nevertheless," he said, at last. " Had I kept silent yesterday, when I shivered your happiness with my foolish words, I should have spared you much ; then you had not cast away the pearl, to which I, poor fool ! in a presumptuous, self-forgetting moment, stretched out my hand."

Bianchi was silent—a hot flush passed over him, he tried to speak. “If I brought her back to you, and said, ‘there you have her again ; I do not envy you, for my heart hangs on another jewel, and it requires no sacrifice to bind us to each other,’—would you believe me, Carlo ?”

He saw the shifting of overwhelming emotions flit across the face of his friend. The artist supported himself against the table, his head pressed against his breast which laboured violently ; his lips moved themselves, soundless. Theodore went to the door, and called “Caterina !” She had stood without, death and life before her ; as she stepped slowly and with hesitating foot over the threshold, she saw Carlo standing by the table with arms outstretched towards her. His knees shook under him—with a cry of joy she cast herself upon his neck.

The door had remained open—Theodore had his back turned towards it, lost in reverie over the relief of Edward, which stood sideways on its scaffolding. He heard a light rustling behind him, and turned round. At the same moment Caterina freed herself from Bianchi’s arms, and started. They saw three stranger forms standing hesitating in the open doorway—an elderly pair and a fair young girl. Theodore remembered her.

“ We disturb you,” said the old gentleman ; “ pray pardon us ; but the door was wide open—we will come again at a more convenient time, Signor Bianchi.”

“Enter,” said Bianchi; “you do not disturb me. Those whom you see here are a friend and—my wife—Signora Bianchi.” He laid an emphasis on the last words, and glanced at Caterina, who looked up to him in a transport of happiness. Meanwhile, Theodore had retreated from before the monument. The father greeted him with his old heartiness, and then turned towards the relief. He exchanged no greeting with the women. The old lady had, at Bianchi’s first word, advanced towards the artist’s work, and stood speechless before it. Mary’s glance rested but for a short time on the statue of her brother, and then flew to Caterina. She remembered her well. Whilst her parents stood leaning upon each other, deeply affected, before the relief, unable to tear themselves away from it, she approached Theodore; she spoke gently to him, she took his hand, her eyes overflowed. They interchanged vows, confessions, self-accusations—each anticipating the other, each outbidding the other in assurances of boundless love.

No one overheard them; for even Bianchi, though he spoke not, forgot all in the eyes of his wife.

At last Mary’s father went to him and pressed his hand—his eyes were moistened—the mother wept silently in her handkerchief. “You know enough,” said the old man; “it is needless for us to speak—only one thing—when do you begin its execution in marble! I have altered my plan; I only wish a stone to be placed over my son’s grave, bearing a

simple inscription. This relief I must place in the room where he lived, on the place where stood his couch ; we cannot consecrate the spot better. But the time will seem very long to me till it is our own. You will be the best judge of the marble. Do not delay for an hour ! ”

Meanwhile the mother had recovered her composure. She turned and gave Theodore her hand, drew him towards her and kissed him on the lips, which she had done but once before, on the day when she betrothed her child to him—then they all left the studio. The sky was clear and serene, and brightly shone the sun over the banks of the Tiber.

THE END.





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